



# live well, work well

Brought to you by: Walworth County

December 2012

## Coping with Holiday Stress

### Tips from the SupportLinc Employee Assistance program



The holiday season should be an enjoyable time for everyone, but often it brings an unwelcome guest — stress. And it's no wonder. The holidays present a dizzying array of emotional and financial demands. Being realistic, planning ahead, and seeking support can help ward off stress and keep you holidays happy. Remember when stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past. You can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays by following these tips:

**Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to. Be open to creating new ones.

**Acknowledge your feelings.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

**Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.

**Set aside differences.** Accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. Be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.

**Stick to a budget.** Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Try these alternatives: Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.

**Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list.

**Learn to say no.** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity.

**Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.

**Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do.

**Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling overwhelmed, persistently sad or anxious. If these feelings last for a while, consider contacting SupportLinc, your employee assistance program, at 888-881-5462.

All requests for information or assistance through the SupportLinc program are free to you and are strictly confidential. You can contact SupportLinc anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## Safe Toys and Gifts Month



December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month. When purchasing toys and gifts this month, think about whether or not they have small parts that could become detached, sharp or pointy edges or pieces, or if they pose some other type of risk.

Realize that, especially when giving a gift to a child, the item may not be used for its intended purpose, and plan accordingly. Pay attention to suggested ages as well, keeping toys away from children who are too young for them.

### DID YOU KNOW

Choking is among the top five causes of accidental death in the United States, with children under the age of three being at the highest risk.

Toys and other gifts can be hazardous and even deadly, so pay extra attention to safety labels and warnings when purchasing items for children.



## 4 Easy At-work Exercises

If your job involves sitting or standing in one place all day, it may seem impossible to stay fit. There are, however, some exercises that are easy to do while at work, even if you can't get up and move around much. Try these four simple exercises and start feeling better about yourself and your job:

- Get rid of your chair for a short time each day—form a sitting position, but without your chair to support you.



- Take the stairs instead of the elevator, and try to get an extra few flights of stairs in during lunch, or on a break.
- Hold an object, such as an empty coffee mug, between your knees while sitting, and alternate between squeezing your knees together tightly and partially releasing.
- Stretch your arms and wrists by holding one arm in front of you, palm up. Grab your fingers with your other hand and alternate between pulling them toward you and pushing them down.

## Holiday Budgeting

From bringing treats to school or work to giving gifts and buying decorations, holiday expenses can add up quickly. Don't let the extra spending linger into January with these holiday budgeting tips.

Try to balance your extra expenses by decreasing your spending in other areas. For example, if you go out for pizza and a movie every other weekend, skip it this month. The money you save will help offset the season's extra expenses.

When travelling, be smart. If you are flying to visit relatives, and one flight is \$200 cheaper per person, but requires a 45-minute layover, save yourself some cash and take the cheaper flight. If you are driving long distances, consider public transportation or carpooling. The extra cash will help balance your holiday budget.

Do some of your holiday shopping online. Not only will you be less tempted to stray from your original shopping goals, but you'll also be able to use email promotions and coupon codes to your advantage—if you subscribe to the e-retailers you plan to shop at, often you will receive emails with significant savings, and you'll know when all of the big sales are going on. In addition, you won't have to wait in long holiday lines.

Think about how the holidays could affect your energy usage—those lights lining your driveway use electricity. Try using LED holiday lights to save money on your power bill, and make sure to turn lights off when you're not using them or not home.



## Quick Turkey Soup

Chilly weather and shorter days may leave you wanting warm, hearty meals that don't take hours to prepare. This quick turkey soup is a cinch to make, and will keep you warm on cold, winter nights.

- 2 c. skinless white turkey meat, cooked
- 3 c. water
- ½ c. celery, diced
- 1 ½ c. frozen mixed vegetables, thawed
- 14 ½ oz. low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 c. elbow macaroni, uncooked
- ½ tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. poultry seasoning (or any mixture of thyme, sage, marjoram, rosemary, black pepper and nutmeg)

In a medium saucepan, combine turkey, water, celery, vegetables, broth, poultry seasoning and pepper. Cook over high heat, stirring occasionally, until mixture comes to a full boil. Add macaroni and reduce heat to low. Cover and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until macaroni is tender.

Yield: 8 servings. Each serving provides 125 calories, 1g total fat, 0g saturated fat, 27 mg cholesterol, 15 g carbohydrates, 13g protein and 125 mg sodium.

Source: <http://healthvermont.gov>

