



Beating Holiday Stress Advice from Affinity EAP

Stressed? Of course you are --it's the holidays. Shopping, party schedules, Aunt Mildred's insults -- these are just a few of the reasons we dread the joy of the season. How do we keep ourselves from stretching our mental health too thin? Here are some uncommon tips from your friendly Affinity EAP counselors.

Take off work.

This time of year, we could all use extra hours in the day. Claim yours by taking vacation time off from work to do your shopping, baking, or errands. Trying to cram everything into limited after-hours adds stress on top of an already stressful to-do list.

Remember why we celebrate.

If you're buried beneath a pile of sale ads, it's easy to think Christmas is all about shopping. Take an emotional break from consumerism by focusing your attention on something meaningful--inspirational literature, a favorite family photo album, or a classic holiday DVD.

Make your prep a party.

Why not combine holiday preparations with socializing? Invite friends or neighbors over for a gift wrapping or baking party.

Ask for help.

Here's a novel idea: you don't have to do it all yourself. Hosting this year? Delegate cleaning duties to your spouse and kids. Ask family members to bring a side dish. Throw everyone a towel for drying dishes after dinner. Cooperation can be part of the fun.

Recruit a child wrangler.

Big parties often mean lots of kids--which means lots of noise and energy underfoot. Designate one adult or teenager to organize games for the kiddos in a separate space. This allows the kids to be kids while the adults can enjoy some grown-up social time.

Forgive and move on.

Family gatherings can be stressful. Grudges, hurt feelings, and strained relationships are as common around the table as pumpkin pie. This holiday season, before you set the table or load the trunk with gifts, make a decision to forgive someone--even if they don't deserve it. You'll be amazed at how it lightens your own load.