

HelpNet *Works!*

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*Your Employee Assistance Program
Newsletter*

SEASONAL STRESS SOLUTIONS

A fire crackles in the hearth. Aromas of cider and gingerbread fill the house. It's as peaceful as the hush after a freshly fallen snow.

That's the fantasy, at least. Rarely is the reality of the season so idyllic. You shop, wrap, bake, cook, clean, and decorate yourself into a frenzy, then wonder where all the time has gone. Here's help with the stressors that can threaten your good cheer.

Stressor: LONG LINES

At department stores, take all your purchases to a less crowded register near the back or on an upper floor, says Stephanie Winston, author of *Getting Organized*. Or look for ones on the left side of the store—most people finish their shopping at the right side, near the entrance.

But rest assured: You will be stuck in lines. Rather than fume at check-fumblers and people with 20 items in the 12-items-or-fewer lane, breathe deeply and compose a holiday e-mail in your mind. "Keep your spirits up by using the time in line to reflect on a happy life experience," says Lisa Lewis, director of clinical psychology at The Menninger Clinic in Houston. "Divert your mind from negatives while savoring the positives."

Stressor: CRABBY CLERKS

If anything takes the ho-ho-ho out of the holidays, it's overworked, grumpy clerks. Immunize yourself.

"I used to let them turn me into them, because mean-spiritedness can be contagious," says Michael McKee, vice chairman of psychiatry and psychology at the Cleveland Clinic. "But I realized, if you do that, you've handed control of your life to them." Try being sympathetic. Tell them you understand how difficult their job is, and thank them for doing it.

Stressor: OTHER PEOPLE'S KIDS

"Kids are like puppies. They're noisy, adventurous and want to check out strange surroundings. And when bored, they can be destructive," say Mary Jo Rulnick, author of *The Frantic Woman's Guide to Feeding Family and Friends*. Give them a room to play in with movies, toys, and an art box filled with construction paper, scissors, and decals that they can plaster on a designated window.

Stressor: MONEY

The gift list is always bigger than the checkbook balance. Vow to spend within your means this year. The average family carries about \$9,000 on credit cards. "That's a high price to pay simply to impress somebody," says Suze Orman, host of *The Suze Orman Show*. Concentrate on thoughtful giving, not lavish spending. Make a note when someone mentions a novel she'd like to read or an old movie he's never seen. And agree to a gift moratorium with your spouse, immediate family, or friends. Exchange homemade cookies or candies instead.

Stressor: COOKING FOR COMPANY

Buy prepared foods and dress them up before company arrives. Add cream cheese and a teaspoon of vanilla to a sugar cookie mix; it will taste like made-from-scratch, says Sandra Lee, author of *Semi-Homemade 20-Minute Meals*. Make five batches and freeze separately. For that Norman Rockwell moment, defrost and roll out the dough when guests arrive. Microwave mashed potatoes and add lots of butter and sour cream. Convince Aunt Gertrude your cranberry sauce is from scratch by combining canned and whole cranberries; heat in a saucepan, adding fresh mint, pecans, and teaspoon of maple syrup. "It tastes fabulous," says Lee. And go almost dishwasher free until New Year's by stocking up on festive red plastic or paper plates, cutlery, cups and napkins. What's left can be used on Valentine's Day or the Fourth of July.

If you need information or assistance with holiday stress, or any type of problem, please call HelpNet to set up an appointment. We are always here to assist you or your family members when needed. HelpNet phone numbers are listed on the reverse side of this page.

Sleep: Fact or Fiction?

There are plenty of rumors and myths when it comes to getting—and not getting—a good night's sleep. Separating the fact from fiction is helpful in your quest for restful sleep. See if you know which is fact and which is fiction.

"Most chronic insomnia is caused by stress and will go away when stress is reduced or eliminated."

FICTION: *While stress can cause insomnia, there are often multiple causes and they typically may not go away.*

"As we age, we need less sleep."

FICTION: *Older adults require the same amount of sleep as young adults, but may experience more difficulty sleeping.*

"Alcohol is a good sleep aid."

FICTION: *Consuming alcohol prior to bedtime can induce sleep, but it can also lead to early waking and fragmented sleep. It generally worsens insomnia.*

"Insomnia is the most common sleep disturbance in America."

FACT: *Approximately 100 million Americans suffer from insomnia.*

"Men are less likely than women to experience insomnia."

FACT: *Insomnia affects people of all ages, genders, and races; however, it is more prevalent in women than men.*

"Taking sleeping pills leads to addiction."

FICTION: *Some older classes of sleep treatments, such as barbiturates, can be addictive; however, the newer sleep aids, like Lunesta, have low risk of addiction.*

Life is a balancing act. Use a very good net - HelpNet!

Only you can be yourself.

No one else is qualified for the job.



Where to go for help...

HelpNet

Employee Assistance Program

Alpena/Kalkaska

1-800-334-6422

Battle Creek Office

269-660-3900 or 800-969-6162

Brighton/Howell

1-800-969-6162

Coldwater

1-800-969-6162

Flint

810-235-9550 or 800-230-0151

Grand Rapids

616-774-2346 or 866-746-0873

Greater Detroit Area

1-800-969-6162

Hillsdale

517-796-2163 or 866-245-3815

Jackson Office

517-796-2163 or 866-245-3815

Kalamazoo Office

269-372-4500 or 800-523-0591

Lansing Office

517-882-6071 or 1-800-852-6268

Saginaw Office

989-754-5599 and 800-334-6422