

News Release

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GETTING THROUGH OR CELEBRATING?

Tampa, Fla. (November 1, 2012). It's that time of year when there is one holiday after another on our schedules. We are invited to or are the host of parties, celebrate with all kinds of special food, find ourselves driving or flying to see folks and family members that we haven't seen for a while, shop, decorate etc. Sound familiar? These are examples of our collective experiences. Sometimes we get to the point of feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, pressured or even feeling guilty because we can't measure up to other's expectations. Then we turn on the radio and are exposed to holiday music or turn on the television to find a slew of holiday movies all pointing out how wonderful this time of year is and emphasizing a wide variety of celebrations. We are exposed to so many different examples of all the good things holidays are supposed to bring. But holidays also bring a mix of emotions. For some with family members who live elsewhere, there is the feeling of loneliness and/or isolation. For some there is the emotion of guilt over still harboring feelings of anger, or resentment or a lack of forgiveness toward someone. For some there is the continued process of grief over a lost loved one – whether lost through death, separation, divorce or distance. For some there is the excitement of the celebration. For some there is the feeling of inferiority – not being able to measure up to their own or other's expectations – and so it goes.

As human beings, we live in relationship to others and our society and culture often define how those relationships are to be experienced. Sometimes we put pressure on ourselves to

overspend or over-celebrate in order to make everyone else happy. Sometimes we eat a little too much or drink a little too much – sometimes in all the excitement we take unnecessary risks like deciding to drive our vehicle after having consumed some alcohol. Remember that “getting in the spirit” of the holidays means taking responsibility for ourselves and others and being safe.

So what can we do to not only “get through” the holidays but to celebrate them safely? First, we need to be aware of what we are feeling. Using a support system as a safety valve and being open by talking with someone when we are feeling out of sorts can be helpful. Using a designated driver if any alcohol at all is involved keeps us and others safe. Volunteering and reaching out to help someone else will keep loneliness at bay. And most of all, just remembering that there is no such thing as a perfect holiday and that we often have conflicting emotions about the holidays and others will keep us grounded in reality.

Remember that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a benefit available to all employees and dependents of companies contracted with Wood & Associates for providing confidential free professional assistance 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Remember that you or a dependent may contact the EAP regarding any concern that you might have – you don’t have to wait until a problem becomes big to seek help. Above all, keep in mind that concerns develop over time but the way you address them can be changed. So, if you are struggling with how to deal with holidays in a safe, effective way, help is a phone call away.