

News Release

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Holidays Are A'Coming

Tampa, Fla. (November 1, 2011). It's that time of year when one holiday after another is on the schedule. Parties, special food, travel, seeing folks and family members that we haven't seen for a while, shopping, decorating etc. are all part of our collective holiday experience. Then there is the holiday music and a slew of holiday movies all pointing out the wonderful time of year full of celebrations. In the movies and plays, we get to see the best 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. And for some, the holidays bring back memories that trigger feelings that are too mixed to easily identify what is really going on.

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.

What can you do if you if you recognize yourself or a loved one in the above information? Call your EAP. While the EAP is not a treatment program, experienced counselors will help you find out what may be taking place and assist you in getting appropriate help. Sometimes dealing with the stressors and feelings related to holidays can feel overwhelming because we’ve been responding in the same old way over and over. The EAP can help you find a new path so that the stress is managed, relationships are healed, support systems are developed, grief is managed and expectations are kept realistic. Just call your EAP and you will be directed to our experienced team of counselors. It is that simple. We will help you cope, find assistance, and guide you down the path to effectively dealing with whatever might be impacting your life. Help is available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.