

News Release

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Presents or Presence?

Tampa, Fla. (December 1, 2011). The coming of a variety of holiday celebrations, both religious and secular, is once again on the horizon and approaching faster and earlier than many people would like to imagine. While the holidays are festive and the highlight of the year for many, for others it may be a time filled with frustration and feeling over-whelmed. There are many decisions to make, things to get done, mounting expenses and seemingly not enough time in which to accomplish it all. For some the holidays seem to bring on feelings of sadness and depression rather than joy. This can result from major life events or changes during the preceding year through divorce or separation, death of a loved one, change in job situation, or having faced a major illness, financial hardship or natural disaster. The time of year can also trigger a feeling of loss of holidays that were memorable or painful memories of past holidays marked by disappointment and unfulfilled wishes. The attitude and approach we take can have a strong effect on lessening our sense of stress and pressure during this time of year. In an effort to create the most personally rewarding and enjoyable holiday season, you may wish to consider the following ideas:

- 1) Think about what you want your holiday season to be like. Would you like to follow a past tradition or is this a year to try something new and different?**
- 2) Learn to think outside the box. Many different professions require that portions of, or the entire holiday be spent at work. How can you structure the celebration of a holiday so that it is meaningful to you within the context of the time you have available and the people with whom you will be able to celebrate.**

- 3) Plan ahead and allow a reasonable amount of time to accomplish tasks. Putting things off until the last minute will surely decrease your enjoyment and contribute to feelings of pressure and urgency.**
- 4) Make a concerted effort to become organized and establish priorities. Constructing a “to do” list can help in this regard, and also helps you to see that you are making progress in getting things accomplished.**
- 5) Develop a realistic budget and plan to stick to it. Avoid the tendency toward overspending, which can cause a financial backlash for months to come. Remind yourself that the pleasure that comes from giving should not depend on the size or expense of the gift.**
- 6) Plan to stay in touch with friends and family through writing cards or letters, telephone calls or visits when possible. If you anticipate being alone, consider planning a meal, activity or get together and invite others to join in. This can be a good buffer against feelings of loneliness and isolation.**
- 7) For those who find themselves feeling sad, burdened or distressed over the holidays, seek out a trusted friend with whom you can talk openly.**
- 8) What can you do 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.**