

News Release

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Presents or Presence?

Tampa, Fla. (December 1, 2013). 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. 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. Remember that the EAP Program is a benefit available to you, your dependents and your significant others. Help is available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.**

Remember that while holidays can be fun and contribute to social support, they can also be stressful – particularly when we fall prey to the expectations of others. If you need to need some help in determining how you really want to celebrate or if you need some support, call you EAP. You can explore in a confidential setting the concerns that you have and receive assistance to determine what is meaningful to you and those you love. When you need to sort out your feelings about what is happening in your life help is a phone call away and available 24/7/365. Above all, keep in mind that concerns develop over time but the way you address them can be changed. The EAP representative will help you find the best solution for your particular situation. Also the EAP is a tool for personal and professional growth.

Remember that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a benefit available to all employees and dependents of companies contracted with Wood & Associates for providing EAP services and provides 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. The EAP can help you find a new path so that the changes you need to make can be managed.

EAP is a tool for personal and professional growth. Above all, keep in mind that concerns develop over time but the way you address them can be changed. The EAP representative will help you find the best solution for your particular situation and help is just a phone call away. Call: (813) 870-0392 (Hillsborough County, Florida), (727) 576-5164 (Pinellas County, Florida), or (800) 343-4670 (out of area toll free).

About Wood & Associates

Wood & Associates is an Employee Assistance Program and behavioral health consulting firm that helps employers maintain productivity, safety and behavioral health in the workplace. Wood & Associates is a pioneer in the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) industry and has served employers and employees in the greater Tampa Bay area and nationwide since

1982. The firm's diverse group of clients includes a number of major employers who also contract for its mental health and substance abuse services.

Gary L. Wood, Psy.D., founder of the Wood & Associates consulting practice, is a pioneer in the field of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services. Since 1979, his practice has centered on providing solutions to employee and organizational problems. Wood is a licensed clinical psychologist, a member of the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology, and a graduate of Rutgers University, West Georgia College and Mercer University.

Patricia N. Alexander earned a Ph.D. in mental health counseling at the University of Florida. Trained in critical incident stress management through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, she is a Florida Licensed Mental Health Counselor and nationally certified counselor. Through her work experience she has addressed all types of critical incident situations, including explosions, multiple homicides, suicides, line-of-duty deaths, serious accidents and robberies. Alexander conducts training on stress management for law enforcement and businesses, and has developed peer support programs for law enforcement and industry. Alexander is an educator and consultant on a wide variety of behavioral health concerns.