Dealing with holiday stress

As to-do lists pile up, you might find the holidays start feeling more hectic than fun. If you find holiday stress beginning to affect your wellbeing and putting a damper on festivities, consider using some of the tips below.

Recognize signs of stress

Activities associated with the holiday season – cooking, decorating, shopping, gathering – often create feelings of joy and contentment. However, a full schedule can have an impact on your emotional health.

Some signs of stress include:

- Insomnia
- Irritability
- Body aches
- High blood pressure
- Fatigue

- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Over or undereating
- Depression

Ways to reduce stress

Find the method of stress relief that works best for you this holiday season to relax and recharge during the busyness of the holidays.

Re-evaluate your goals

Trying to stay healthy while still accomplishing holiday tasks may leave you feeling pressed for both time and energy. When your mental and physical health start to be affected by the volume of holiday tasks, take a moment to connect with what's most important to you. Prioritize those activities and give yourself permission to let some of the less impactful ones go this year. Skipping a few chores to focus on your wellbeing can ultimately increase your productivity.

Establish boundaries

Different political views, lifestyles or religious beliefs among family and friends can be a source of tension. While discussions about these topics can happen at any time of year, holiday togetherness can create extra opportunity. Having a calm, measured response sets boundaries and can provide a model for others. Exit heated conversations by letting the relevant parties know you're "not interested" and walk away.

The holiday toolkit

www.eaptoolkit.com/holiday

Maintain healthy habits

Delicious food and a cozy living room join forces to make staying healthy challenging during the holidays. Even by adding one or two easy habits into your routine can make a world of difference to your overall wellbeing. Waking up and going to bed around the same time each day, even if you have the day off, can help you stay on track. Drinking plenty of water, eating a balanced diet and staying active can boost your mood and keep your energy levels up for all your holiday activities.

Take time for yourself

During the holidays, family gatherings, charitable activities and social outings can compete for your time and energy. Spending time with and helping others doesn't mean you should forget about your needs. Take breaks to give yourself a chance to rest and recharge. For example, schedule time in between obligations to do something just for you. Whether you indulge in a hot bath or treat yourself to a nice dinner, taking care of yourself can help you enjoy your time with loved ones even more.

When stress begins to affect your productivity or mindset, reach out to your mental health professional or your employee assistance program for support and guidance.