

Tips for Coping with Holiday Stress and Depression

For some people, the holidays bring unwelcome guests — stress and depression. And it's no wonder. In an effort to pull off a perfect Hallmark holiday, you might find yourself facing a dizzying array of demands—work, parties, shopping, baking, cleaning, caring for elderly parents or kids on school break, and scores of other chores. So much for peace and joy, right?

Actually, with some practical tips, you can minimize the stress and depression that often accompany the holidays. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would. Some valuable tips to prevent holiday stress are as follows:

- **Be realistic.** As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Hold on to those you can and want to. But accept that you may have to let go of others. For example, if your adult children and grandchildren can't all gather at your house as usual, find new ways to celebrate together from afar, such as sharing pictures, e-mails or videotapes.
- **Set differences aside.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all your expectations. Practice forgiveness. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. With stress and activity levels high, the holidays might not be conducive to making quality time for relationships. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.
- **Stick to a budget.** Before you go shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend on gifts and other items. Then be sure to stick to your budget. If you don't, you could feel anxious and tense for months afterward as you struggle to pay the bills. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.
- **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make one big food-shopping trip. That'll help prevent a last-minute scramble to buy forgotten ingredients — and you'll have time to make another pie, if the first one's a flop. Expect travel delays, especially if you're flying.
- **Learn to say no.** Believe it or not, people will understand if you can't do certain projects or activities. If you say yes only to what you really want to do, you'll avoid feeling resentful, bitter and overwhelmed. If it's really not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.
- **Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a dietary free-for-all. Some indulgence is OK, but overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks. Continue to get plenty of sleep and schedule time for physical activity.
- **Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Steal away to a quiet place, even if it's to the bathroom for a few moments of solitude. Take a walk at night and stargaze. Listen to soothing music. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm. Source: Mayo Clinic—Tools for Healthier Lives

Coming Changes in the “Occupational Alert”

HealthFirst Medical has been sending out our “Occupational Alert” newsletter for over ten years. We have tried to give our companies important workers compensation updates as well as giving you important information on health and wellness issues.

Starting with our Jan.-Feb. 2008 issue, we will be sending our newsletter to you via email. In order for this to work effectively we need to have everyone’s email address. With the set up of our new Galen computer system we did get emails for most companies, but there are some we do not have. If you are not receiving emails from HealthFirst on the status of your patients, we may not have your email.

Please take a moment to send your email address to karinadelacruz@healthfirstmedical.net. If you don’t have email, please let us know and we will continue to mail you our newsletter.

Think “In House Modified Duty” in 2008

HealthFirst Medical has been running an In House Modified Duty program for several years now. More and more employers are utilizing the program to control the costs of their Workers’ Compensation premiums. The increase in the usage of the program this year shows that employers are benefiting from using the program.

Some of the companies using the program have modified duty available in their work place, but still use our program on cases for which they cannot provide modified duty. Our program works very well for problem cases. If you have a worker on modified duty for a long time it can effect the moral of their co-workers. By moving that person out of the workplace to our program, he or she is out of sight and moral of the others workers improves.

The Modified Duty program is very structured and requires the employee to clock in and out each day and spend 8 hours in our facility. They are in a classroom environment and are required to watch health and safety videos, read and answer questions on articles pertaining to



Holiday Hours

HealthFirst Medical Group will have limited service during the holiday season. Both the North and South Clinics will be open on **December 24 and December 31 from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for all services. After 2:00 p.m. both clinics will be open for Emergency Care and Random Drug screening only. Both the North and South Clinics will open for Emergency Care on December 25 (Christmas Day) and January 1 (New Years Day).** Our regular schedule will resume on January 2nd. If you have any questions call our office at **(562) 949-9328 or (562) 926-3440.**

Changes in Company Information?
Contact: _____
Insurance Carrier: _____
Other: _____



workplace safety and their injury and participate in two monitored walks each day. The program is designed to teach them valuable information about their bodies and how to prevent injuries in the future. The wellness coordinator reviews each participants progress in the program in order to return them to regular work as quickly as possible. Please contact our marketing department at 562-926-3440 or 562-949-9328 if you would like a tour of the program or more information.