Plan for a stress-free holiday season

The winter holidays include many welcome aspects of life: fun with family and friends, celebration, bountiful food and drink, and plenty of warm feelings. However, a busy holiday season can also bring lots of stress.

It’s easy to get stretched thin at this festive time of year. Cooking, cleaning, shopping, children’s school events, office parties, family gatherings and travel can combine to make the holidays a fairly frenetic period.

One of the keys to enjoying a more relaxing holiday season is to have a plan for the situations that often bring you stress. Keeping your expectations realistic, looking after your own health, and setting limits on what you’ll agree to do can be important components of less-stressful holidays.

In this holiday-themed edition, we review:

- Strategies for maintaining better health, balance and serenity during the holidays.
- Ideas on how to overcome common holiday challenges.
- Tips for having more relaxation and less stress this year.

Log on and learn! Look for Holiday Survival on the ParTNers website under the Member section. You’ll find information on how to better care for yourself as you celebrate the season. Also, participate in the Holiday Survival webinar on Wednesday, November 18, 2015!

#My4Thanks

During the month of November the ParTNers EAP takes to social media focusing on gratitude and giving thanks for our friends, family, co-workers and ourselves. Be sure to watch for the weekly themes.

You can easily participate by posting a photo, quote, or a message on social media about why you are thankful—using the #my4thanks tag.

Weekly themes include:

- Week of 11/2 – 11/6: Gratitude and thankful for friends
- Week of 11/9 – 11/13: Gratitude and thankful for family
- Week of 11/16 – 11/20: Gratitude and thankful for self
- Week of 11/23 – 11/27: Gratitude and thankful for co-workers
Managing common holiday challenges

Although most people expect joy and celebration to permeate the holiday season, many find keeping up with the annual festive routine somewhat depressing. If this sounds like you, here are ideas for managing some common holiday hurdles differently this year.

Don’t strive for the “perfect” holidays
Many of us cling to an image of the ideal holiday season where everyone is relentlessly cheerful. However, perfection is impossible, so we may become disappointed and stressed if things go awry. Instead, have realistic, non-ambitious expectations—and take one day at a time.

Create some new traditions
If the same old family holiday rituals have become a burden for you, try celebrating in new ways. Start early in talking with the family about making positive changes this year, e.g., “Why don’t we do a potluck this year instead of expecting Aunt Jill to cook for all of us?”

Focus on presence, not presents
Instead of trying to buy everyone happiness via a truckload of pricey gifts, try to keep things simple; focus more on having fun together. First, establish a budget and stick to it. Set a gift limit or organize a single-item gift exchange. Consider limiting gift-giving to children only.

Acknowledge and share your feelings
If you’ve lost someone close to you this year, don’t try to put on a brave face just for the holidays. Express your grief and sadness to those closest to you.

Don’t revive old conflicts
Avoid using holiday celebrations to confront others. This isn’t the best time for conflict.

Allow yourself breaks
Make an effort to unplug by yourself for short periods of relaxation between holiday tasks or events. This can help you unwind and stay on a healthy track.

Stress busting tips for the holidays

Here are some quick and easy tips for beating holiday stress.

• If crowds and parking lots stress you out, do most of your shopping online.
• Schedule some of your favorite "me" time over the holidays. See a movie, read a book, or just set aside some quiet time to thoroughly slow down.
• Take outdoor breaks: stargaze for a few minutes or take a long walk in the brisk air.
• Enjoy a long, relaxing, candle-lit soak in the tub with bath fragrances or salts, and put on some soothing music in the background.
• If your holiday stress gets to be too much, contact your ParTNers EAP at any time, 24/7 for confidential, no-cost counseling and resources.