

A monthly newsletter published by Interface EAP

## Holiday Help: Top Ten Stress Busting Tips

**S**tress is perceived in the mind, suffered in the human spirit, experienced via the emotions, expressed in behavior, and “held” in the body.

– Anon

### 1. Learn to manage your time more effectively.

We waste a lot of time doing unimportant tasks, especially when stressed, so prioritize your day and do the important jobs first. Give unpleasant tasks a high priority and do them first. The unimportant ones can wait, and often they will disappear completely leaving you time to do other things.

**2. Adopt a healthy lifestyle.** If we eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, and ensure we get adequate sleep and rest, our body is better able to cope with stress should it occur.

**3. Know your limitations and do not take on too much.** We cause ourselves a great deal of stress because we like people to like us and do not want to let people down. We then end up doing more than we should. Learn to delegate effectively and be assertive so that you can say no without upsetting or offending.

**4. Find out what causes you stress.** Take time to discover what is worrying you and try to change your thoughts and behavior to reduce it. A stress assessment can help you to fully understand the causes, implications to your health and how to manage, cope and make those necessary changes.

**5. Avoid unnecessary conflict.** Do not be too argumentative. Is it really worth the stress? Look for win – win situations. Look for a resolution to a dispute where both parties can achieve a positive outcome. Find out what the real cause of the problem is and deal with it.

**6. Accept the things you cannot change.** Changing a difficult situation is not always possible. If



this proves to be the case, recognize and accept things as they are and concentrate on all that you do have control over. Managing change effectively is essential or else performance will be reduced.

### 7. Take time out to relax and recharge your batteries.

Take a break - you will perform more effectively during work after even a short 10-15 minute break, easily

making up the time you used relaxing.

**8. Find time to meet friends.** Friends can ease work troubles and help us see things in a different way. The activities we engage in with friends help us relax and we will often have a good laugh. It boosts the immune system which is often depleted during stress. If you do become stressed, engage in some form of physical activity. It works off the biochemical and physical changes that occur within your body due to stress. Relaxation also helps your body return to its normal healthy state. Good relaxation techniques include breathing exercises, massage and a variety of complimentary therapies.

**9. Try to see things differently, develop a positive thinking style.** If something is concerning you, try to see it differently. Talk over your problem with somebody before it gets out of proportion. Often, talking to a friend/colleague/family member will help you see things from a different and less stressful perspective. You may also need to consider professional help in order to achieve the desired outcome and prevent ill health and/or burnout.

### 10. Avoid alcohol, nicotine and caffeine as coping mechanisms.

Long term, these faulty coping mechanisms will just add to the problem. For example, caffeine and nicotine are stimulants, too much and the body reacts to this with the stress response increasing or even causing anxiety symptoms. Alcohol is a depressant!

Source: *International Stress Management Association*

Interface EAP

Total Life Assistance™



# Combat Computer Station Stress



Working at a computer work station all day can take a toll on the body. Repetitive activities and lack of mobility can contribute to aches, pains, and eventual injuries. Sitting at a desk while using the keyboard for hours on a day-to-day basis can result in poor circulation to joints and muscles. It can also create an imbalance in strength and flexibility of certain muscles, and muscle strain.

**These issues can be easily remedied by taking frequent short breaks, or “micro breaks,” throughout your day:**

- ◆ Get out of your chair several times a day and move around---even for 30 seconds.
- ◆ Roll your shoulders backwards.
- ◆ Turn your head side to side.
- ◆ Stretch out your forearms and your legs.

**The position of the keyboard is critical:**

- ◆ The keyboard should be at a height that allows you to have your forearms slightly below a horizontal line---or your elbows at slightly more than a 90 degree angle.
- ◆ You should be able to slide your knees under the keyboard tray or desk.
- ◆ Avoid reaching for the keyboard by extending your arms or raising your shoulders.
- ◆ Try to avoid having the keyboard on top of your desk. That is too high for almost everyone---unless you can raise your seat. The elbow angle is the best test of keyboard position.

**The position of your computer monitor is important:**

- ◆ The monitor should be directly in front of you.
- ◆ The top of the monitor should be at your eye level, and at a distance where you can see it clearly without squinting, or leaning forward or backward.
- ◆ If you need glasses for reading, you may need to have a special pair for use at your computer to avoid tipping your head backward to see through bi-focals or other types of reading glasses.

# When Holidays Hurt

## Coping with Grief during the Holidays

At holiday time, many people are dealing with loss and are often caught in a dilemma between the need to grieve and the pressure to get into the spirit of the season. Holidays or not, it is important for the bereaved to find ways to take care of themselves. The following guidelines may be helpful:



- 1. Plan ahead as to where and how you will spend your time during the holidays.** Let yourself scale back on activities if you want to. Redefine your holiday expectations. This can be a transition year to begin new traditions and let others go.
- 2. Select a candle in your loved one's favorite color and scent.** Place it in a special area of your home and light it at a significant time throughout the holidays, signifying the light of the love that lives on in your heart.
- 3. Give yourself permission to express your feelings.** If you feel an urge to cry, let the tears flow. Tears are healing. Scientists have found that certain brain chemicals in our tears are natural pain relievers.
- 4. Shakespeare once said, "Give sorrow words..." Write an "un-sent letter" to your loved one.** Expressing what you are honestly feeling toward him or her at this moment. After you compose the letter, you may decide to place it in a book, album or drawer in your home, leave it at a memorial site, throw it away, or even burn it and let the ashes rise symbolically.
- 5. When you are especially missing your loved one, call family members or dear friends and share your feelings.** If they knew him or her, consider asking them to share some memories of times they shared with your loved one.
- 6. If you live within driving distance of the cemetery, decorate the memorial site with a holiday theme.** Decorating the site yourself can be helpful in remembering and celebrating your loved one's life during the holidays, and may free you to cherish the present holiday with your remaining family.
- 7. Play music that is comforting and meaningful to you.** Take a few moments to close your eyes and feel the music within the center of your being.
- 8. Give money you would have spent for gifts for your absent loved one to a charity in your family member's name.** Consider donating money to the public library to buy a particular book. Have the book dedicated to your loved one's memory. Buy a present for a child who would not otherwise have a gift during the holiday season.
- 9. Read a book or article on grief.** Some suggestions are: *Don't Take My Grief Away From Me* by Doug Manning; *The Comfort Book For Those Who Mourn* compiled by Anna Trimiew; and *A Grief Observed* by C. S. Lewis.
- 10. Remember** the reality that the anticipation of the holidays without your family member is often harder than the actual holidays themselves.

**Stress**

For free and confidential assistance, call your  
Employee Assistance Program and speak with a Care Coordinator:

**Marital Problems**

**Financial**

**Family Problems**

**Legal**

(713) 781-3364

Se Habla Español

**Alcohol/Drug Problems**

(800) 324-4327

(800) 324-2490

**Depression**

**Other Referrals**

[www.4eap.com](http://www.4eap.com)

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