

A monthly newsletter published by Interface EAP

Preventing Holiday Stress and Depression

When stress is at its peak, it is hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if you know the holidays have taken an emotional toll in previous years. Try these tips to head off holiday stress and depression.

- ◆ **Acknowledge your feelings.** If a loved one has recently died or you are not able to be with your loved ones, realize that it is normal to feel sadness or grief. It is OK now and then to take time just to cry or express your feelings. You cannot force yourself to be happy just because it is the holiday season.
- ◆ **Seek support.** If you feel isolated or down, seek out family members and friends, or community, religious or social services. They can offer support and companionship. Consider volunteering at a community or religious function. Getting involved and helping others can lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.
- ◆ **Set differences aside.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they do not 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 are 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 do not, you could feel anxious and tense for months afterward as



you struggle to pay the bills. Do not 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 will help prevent a last-minute scramble to buy forgotten ingredients. Expect travel delays, especially if you are flying.
- ◆ **Learn to say no.** Believe it or not, people will understand if you cannot do certain projects or activities. If you say yes only to what you really want to do, you will avoid feeling resentful, bitter and overwhelmed. If it is 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.
- ◆ **Do not abandon healthy habits.** Do not 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 do not go overboard on sweets, cheese, or drinks.
- ◆ **Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, unable to sleep, irritable, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for several weeks, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional. Start by calling your EAP!





Improving Workplace Etiquette

In today's workplace, cubicles, speakerphones, and personal devices are only a few of the distractions that plague most workers. Use the following tips to make your office a more productive environment for you and your co-workers.

Cubicle Etiquette

- ◆ **Speak softly:** Most cubicle walls are fairly short, allowing your voice to project over the walls into neighboring cubes. Try to speak in a normal voice at a low volume, and avoid whispering since it can be even more distracting. Do not use a speakerphone when making calls, since the other party's voice will carry, as well.
- ◆ **Respect privacy:** Chances are you will be able to hear others' conversations over your cube walls. Even if you have something to offer to the conversation, refrain from interrupting or adding your opinion. If you happen to hear a personal conversation, do not mention the details to anyone, and try to act as if you never heard the information.
- ◆ **Avoid smells:** Food, cologne, and other personal hygiene items should be limited when working in a cubicle environment. Some smells may trigger negative reactions in your co-workers. It is best to use personal products and colognes sparingly and to take your lunch or snacks away from your desk.
- ◆ **Keep it professional:** Do not discuss confidential or private matters in your cubicle. If you need to discuss confidential matters, reserve a conference room or other space with a door to ensure privacy. If you must make a personal call, take your cellular phone to another location where you can speak in private.
- ◆ **Turn off cellular phones:** If you must keep your cell phone on, set the ringing alert to vibrate so it will not distract your co-workers with a noisy ring tone. Be sure to take it with you when you leave your desk in case it rings.
- ◆ **Do not interrupt:** If you need to speak to a co-worker who is on the telephone, never interrupt using questions or gestures, as this is very distracting. Instead, wait until the person is finished to approach him or her with your question or problem. When approaching a co-worker's cubicle, respect his or her privacy and personal space. Do not enter without knocking, and do not rearrange items on his or her desk.

Email Etiquette

- ◆ **Do not type in all capitals:** Typing in all capital letters makes it seem as if you are shouting.
- ◆ **Include a subject:** When emailing, always include a subject line to inform the recipient of the contents of the email. However, keep the subject line short and to the point. The bulk of the information should be placed in the body of the email.
- ◆ **Delete extra information:** When forwarding or replying to an email, delete unnecessary information such as headers and issues that have already been resolved. Do not make the recipient scroll through pages of information in order to find relevant information. When replying to a question, copy the question text to the beginning of the email.
- ◆ **Always reply:** When you receive a question or a request in an email, always make it a point to reply to the sender, even if you cannot provide the information at this time. A reply lets the sender know you have received the request and will be providing the information at a later date.
- ◆ **Proofread:** Always spell check your messages before sending, and read through them to ensure you are conveying the message you intend to send. Grammatical and spelling errors in an email can be interpreted by the recipient as laziness and can lead to misunderstandings.

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Phone Etiquette

- ◆ **Do not eat:** When talking on the phone, refrain from eating and drinking. These sounds can be distracting to the other party.
- ◆ **Leave detailed messages:** When leaving a message, be sure to include enough details for the other party. Clearly state your name, phone number, the purpose of your call and the best time the other party can reach you. Try to include this information in as brief a manner as possible.
- ◆ **Respect time:** When calling, ask if now is a good time for the other person to talk. If it is not, ask when you should call back.

Business Meeting Etiquette

- ◆ **Have an agenda:** When you are running the meeting, always have an agenda, and distribute it prior to the meeting. This will allow attendees time to prepare. During the meeting, stick to the agenda; if new issues arise, schedule another time to discuss them.
- ◆ **Invite the appropriate parties:** A meeting is only useful if all of the appropriate parties are in attendance. Decisions cannot be made unless everyone who has a stake in the project is involved. Similarly, invite only the required people. Inviting people who do not need to be in attendance shows a lack of respect for their time.
- ◆ **Be on time:** Make sure to always be on time for meetings. Meetings that start late often end late, pushing everyone's schedule out of sync. Being late to meetings shows a lack of respect for your co-workers.
- ◆ **Keep within the scheduled time:** Do not allow the meeting to run over the allotted time. If you need more time to discuss issues, schedule a follow-up meeting for later in the day or week. Respect attendees' time and other projects by staying on schedule.
- ◆ **Thank attendees:** Be sure to thank the meeting attendees for taking the time out of their schedules for the meeting. This is an easy way to show respect for your co-workers.

Office Party Etiquette

- ◆ **Always attend:** Even if the party is not mandatory, it is a good idea to attend. Use the party as a way to meet new people. You do not need to be the first to arrive and the last to leave, but putting in an appearance is a good way to get yourself noticed.
- ◆ **Limit alcohol intake:** When at an office party, remember that you are among bosses and co-workers. Limit your alcohol intake so as not to make a bad impression.
- ◆ **Dress appropriately:** Find out beforehand what type of dress is expected. An office party is not the time to make an outrageous fashion statement.
- ◆ **Mingle:** Be sure to mingle with co-workers and supervisors. Make it a point to talk to people who you do not work with on a daily basis. Use the time to develop relationships.
- ◆ **Include spouses:** If spouses are invited to the party, make sure to include them in conversations. Do not talk about work issues since spouses will likely not be able to participate in the conversation.

Stress	For free and confidential assistance, call your Employee Assistance Program and speak with a Care Coordinator: (713) 781-3364 (800) 324-4327	Se Habla Español (800) 324-2490	Marital Problems
Financial			Family Problems
Legal			Alcohol/Drug Problems
Depression			Other Referrals
			www.4eap.com

Your employer has contracted with Interface EAP to provide you an Employee Assistance Program.