



**PacifiCare**<sup>®</sup>  
Behavioral Health

# Wellness Monthly

Healthy matters to keep in mind.

December 2009

## Holiday Whirl...or Holiday Worries? This Year, Enjoy More and Stress Less

'Tis the season for celebrations, joy and togetherness. For some of us, though, 'tis also the time for overscheduling, overspending and being overstressed. Try these tips to help reduce your stress so that you can make the most of the season.

### Be Happy — Not Harried

- **Make a plan.** Create a list of your priorities for the season. Is there anything you can skip? Schedule days and times for hitting the stores, baking, visiting friends and other holiday activities.
- **Set realistic expectations.** It's impossible to ensure that everyone has a perfect holiday. Don't try to solve

a year's worth of family problems during one holiday get-together.

- **Feel free to say, "No."** You don't have to do it all. Ask relatives or friends to help out with preparing meals, decorating and shuttling out-of-town guests. Decline some invitations if you need to. This isn't always easy, but it can relieve the pressure on your schedule.

### It's All in the Family

- **Make connections.** Use the holidays to reconnect with your loved ones. Everything else — gifts, decorations, food — isn't as important as enjoying time with the people you care about.

- **Keep it short and sweet.** If family visits are stressful, limit the time spent together. Or, plan to visit during another holiday next year.
- **Avoid family squabbles.** If you'll be spending time with people you often disagree with, try to set differences aside to help prevent conflict.

### Eat, Drink and Be Smart

- **Serve healthy snacks.** Don't starve yourself before a big meal. This can lead to overeating. Nibble on vegetables, unsalted pretzels or nuts.
- **Prepare nutritious, low-fat meals.** This can help balance out the

## Holiday Stress Busters

Take care of yourself this season:

- **Get plenty of sleep.** Try to get to bed early when you can, or sneak a nap in the afternoon.
- **Take breaks when you need them.** A short walk can clear your head and provide a few moments of peace.
- **Exercise for an energy boost.** You'll burn extra calories and keep stress in check.
- **Don't turn to alcohol for relief.** Drinking isn't a healthful way to cope with your feelings. If you do drink, know your limits — and never drink and drive.

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inevitable goodies. Don't go overboard, but don't deprive yourself of the season's best eats.

### **The Spirit of the Season**

- **Focus on what really matters.** Remind yourself of the cultural or spiritual meaning of the holidays.

Try to value the time you spend with loved ones and friends.

- **Shine the spotlight on others.** Consider volunteering at a senior center, soup kitchen or women's shelter. Focusing on others may brighten their day and yours, too.

Avoiding holiday stress isn't always easy. But, you don't have to go it alone. PacifiCare Behavioral Health is here to help. Call or log on any time for help with any of life's challenges.



## **Wrap It Up: Stress-Free Shopping**

Mall madness, overspending and the pressure to find the "perfect" present can lead to stress. Don't shop till you drop — try these tips for easier holiday gift-buying:

- **Give yourself a budget and stick to it.** Don't hit the shops without a plan.
- **Make a list and check it twice.** Consider limiting your gift-giving to those closest to you.
- **Get a map.** Plan your route in advance to save time and energy.
- **Read the fine print.** If you shop online, watch



for high and hidden shipping charges.

- **Split it up.** Shopping with your spouse or friend? Divide your list, and set a time to meet when you're done.
- **Beat the rush.** Get to the stores early, or go late.

- **Make homemade gifts such as cookies or crafts.** Remember, it's the thought that counts.
- **Give the gift of health.** Try something new this year — consider giving a gym membership, workout video, pedometer or massage.

## **Resources**

PacifiCare Behavioral Health

Ask your HR representative for your access code and toll-free number.

[www.liveandworkwell.com](http://www.liveandworkwell.com)

Use the search phrase "holiday stress" to learn more about simplifying the season, coping with the holiday blues and managing stress.

Use the search word "shopping" to learn more about choosing safe toys, preventing materialism during the holidays, avoiding holiday burnout and seasonal affective disorder.

The information and therapeutic approaches in this article are provided for educational purposes only and are not meant to be used in place of professional clinical consultations for individual health needs. Certain treatments may not be covered in some benefit plans. Check your health plan regarding your coverage of services.