

HPN EAP Newsletter for Employees



Holiday Emotional Wellness

For many of us, the stressors of the holiday season have the potential to outweigh the positive aspects.

Some Common Holiday Stressors

- High expectations for positive interactions with friends and family. This can lead to disappointment and can increase the likelihood of conflict.
- Feelings of isolation - We are led to believe that the holidays are a time that bring a sense of connection and togetherness. Many may feel more alone during this time of year.
- Depressed mood - The days are becoming shorter, darker and wetter. Sunshine becomes a precious commodity and for some, adequate light is linked with a more positive outlook on life. An increase in the consumption of calories in the form of sugar, fat, and alcohol can bring on unwanted weight gain and, for some, this can be a precursor to diminished self-esteem. In addition, these foods/beverages can adversely affect blood sugar, resulting in the blues.
- Financial challenges - Gift buying and a tendency for increased utility bills during the colder, darker weather can create a financial burden.
- Abuse of alcohol and other drugs - For many of the reasons listed above, some people tend to engage in an increased indulgence in chemicals to cope with holiday stressors. For those in recovery from chemical addictions, this can be a particular area of concern.
- Certain medications are less effective or even dangerous if using them while drinking or using other drugs.
- Anniversary grief - The holidays can bring back memories of times/experiences with those who are no longer with us.

Ways to Take Care of Yourself

- To deal with feelings of isolation, it can be helpful to participate in volunteerism, participate in community events or take a workshop.
- Treat yourself to a fun experience or a gift that you could wrap and later open in honor of Christmas, Hanukkah, Solstice or any other occasion.
- Access your spiritual supports. This can mean returning to familiar traditions/rituals or exploring new sources of support and fellowship.
- If financial problems are an issue, plan on practicing your budgeting skills before the holidays. Consider making baked goods or doing something creative for friends and family, instead of using your credit card. If you get in too deep, call consumer credit counseling.
- Avoid using alcohol and other drugs to cope with emotional challenges. Instead, call a trusted friend, your EAP counselor, sponsor, family member or clergy.
- Increase the lighting in your home. Consider putting lamps (Christmas lights & music) on timers that are set to come on right before your alarm goes off.
- Commit to maintaining an exercise schedule; don't wait for new year's.
- Perhaps most importantly, be gentle with yourself. Stop and enjoy.

Call Health Promotion Northwest at 360-788-6565 for more information and services.

