Reducing Stress During the Holidays

Holidays can be exciting, but reducing stress continues to remain a common concern for many people. Holiday decorations, nostalgia, memories, and commercialization can easily paint an unrealistic picture of what your family get-together and experience should look like. Caution! Holiday excitement and anticipation are healthy and renewing things, but if anxiety and pressure to perform and get everything “perfect” are taking the cheer out of your season, then here’s a tip for you: Use perfection and vision as guides for what you do, not as performance measures for how well you succeed in taking it all on.

Here’s something to think about, too. Much of what we consider to be holiday stress is not about the holidays, per se, but about worrying about the holidays and what comes with the season. For more tips on how to enjoy less stressful holidays this year, check out this WebMD article.

EAP Wellness Calendars Are Still Available!

A new year is fast approaching, which means it’s time to order the annual EAP wellness calendars! This colorful calendar offers an array of tips for your health and well-being that will help you throughout 2016. To request a copy be sent to you via campus mail, call the EAP Office at 442-5483 or click on the “Special Promotions” icon on the EAP website’s home page. http://www.albany.edu/eap/

One per employee while the supply lasts.

“Write it on your heart that every day is the best day of the year.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, American Essayist and Poet (1803-1882)

Article Source: Frontline—Employee Wellness, Productivity & You! Frontline newsletter is courtesy of the New York State Employee Assistance Program.
In the Workplace...

Criticize Yourself (Constructively)

There’s nothing wrong with self-criticism. After all, you can always improve, but don’t confuse self-criticism with self-punishment. Engage in self-criticism that elevates your skills and abilities with a forward-looking approach. Start by reviewing the successful elements of your recent project. Next, divide your assessment into meaningful parameters that you will critique. If your job was to prepare an annual report on widgets for your employer, consider quality, timeliness, use of resources, format appearance, or even self-imposed stress, if you suffer from procrastination, etc. You can divide any project into similar parameters. Rate each one on a scale of 1 to 7 to judge degree of accomplishment. Identify areas for improvement, and review your critique just before your next assignment. Now, attempt to beat your score as you begin working on the new project!

Are You Social Security Savvy?

The Social Security Administration has been keeping track of your eligible wages to determine retirement earnings ever since your first job. **If you are a young worker, you may not know that you can log in to its website and use calculators to determine your future payments, even if you don’t retire for 50 years.** Other calculators on the site address other topics. Think about retirement planning now. There is much to learn about securing your future. Did you know delaying the date that you draw on Social Security until age 70 may increase your retirement by 8 percent per year? To learn more, go to: [https://ssa.gov/planners/benefitcalculators.html](https://ssa.gov/planners/benefitcalculators.html)

Source for Articles: Frontline—Employee Wellness, Productivity & You! Frontline newsletter is courtesy of the New York State Employee Assistance Program.

For Your Financial Well-Being...

Three Free Credit Reports

It’s almost the end of the year. Have you accessed your three FREE credit reports? The [Fair Credit Reporting Act](https://www.consumerfinance.gov/powers/credit-report/) guarantees that you can receive your credit report free of charge from each of the three nationwide credit reporting companies (Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion) every 12 months. [AnnualCreditReport.com](https://www.annualcreditreport.com) is the ONLY authorized source for the free annual credit report that you are entitled to by law. A common practice is to check one company every four months to make sure your credit is in order. Take advantage of this opportunity to gain access to your report and look for mistakes or irregular listings. For more information, click on [Federal Trade Commission](https://www.ftc.gov).
Gratitude: A Predictor of Marital Stability and Satisfaction

A key ingredient of improving marriages might just be gratitude, according to new University of Georgia research. “We found that feeling appreciated and believing that your spouse values you directly influences how you feel about your marriage, how committed you are to it, and your belief that it will last,” said study researchers. The study asked 468 married individuals questions about their financial well-being, communication, and expressions of spousal gratitude. The results indicated that spousal expression of gratitude was the most consistent and significant predictor of marital happiness.

http://news.uga.edu (Search: “power of thank you”)

Don’t Feel Fooled by FOMO

Are all of those happy faces and exciting photos on Facebook causing you to think “Is everyone but me having fun?” If so, you might be a victim of a phenomenon called “fear of missing out” or “FOMO.” FOMO is characterized as a strong sense of apprehension that others are having more fun and more exciting experiences than you. You think you are missing out! FOMO is especially associated with millennial adults who are more vulnerable to high expectations made worse by their attachments to social and instant communication with peers. FOMO is peer-driven and can place you at risk for anxiety. It can cause you to feel extreme dissatisfaction with otherwise worthwhile endeavors to which you have committed—a college, trade, job, business venture—anything that requires self-discipline and the postponement of gratification essential for success. Fear of missing out is nothing new, but a fast-paced and high-tech society accompanied by a modern culture where instant gratification is also marketed to those most vulnerable to this syndrome can make FOMO more acute.

Source: www.jwtintelligence.com/search/FOMO

“Accept fate, and move on. Don't yield to the seductive pull of self-pity. Acting like a victim threatens your future.”

~ Unknown
Are you finding yourself struggling with any of the following?

- Family, parenting, and relationship issues
- Work stress and conflict
- Substance abuse or dependency
- Elder care
- Mental health concerns (e.g., depression, anxiety)
- Legal and/or financial concerns
- Grief and loss
- Or anything else related to work or home that is causing you undue stress and affecting your ability to be as productive as you once were?

You don’t have to deal with it alone. Support is available through UAlbany’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The mission of UAlbany EAP is to provide services to support a healthy, productive workforce. Available to all employees is the voluntary, confidential Information, Assessment, and Referral Service provided by UAlbany EAP Coordinator, Brenda Seckerson. Take advantage of this confidential assistance available to you as an employee benefit.

“If you get up one more time than you fall you will make it through.”

~Chinese Proverb

To schedule an appointment for a confidential Information, Assessment & Referral session, contact:

Brenda Seckerson, EAP Coordinator
442-5483
bseckerson@albany.edu

EAP Website: http://www.albany.edu/eap

Employee Assistance Program-sponsored events and services are open to UAlbany and Research Foundation faculty, staff, family members, UAS employees, GSEU members, and retirees.

Early intervention is the key! Contact EAP.
Heating Help—NYS HEAP

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is a federally funded program that issues heating benefits to supplement a household's annual energy cost. HEAP also offers an emergency benefit for households in a heat or heat-related energy emergency.

Additionally, HEAP offers a heating equipment repair and/or replacement benefit for homeowners with inoperable heating equipment.

HEAP may help you or those you know pay for electricity, propane, natural gas, wood, oil, kerosene, coal, or any other heating fuel. For all of the details about the various programs available and the income guidelines, go to:  http://otda.ny.gov/programs/heap/

How energy efficient is your home? The less efficient your home is, the more money you are losing—not to mention heat!

Get a **Comprehensive Home Energy Assessment** and receive a customized plan to help you save on energy costs. For more information, go to the [NYSERDA website](http://nyservda.com).

PDP Moves to Stuyvesant Plaza

If you haven’t heard the news, the Research Foundation Professional Development Program (PDP) employees moved their offices to Stuyvesant Plaza. Yes, they are close to a lot of cool stores now, but they also have access to a great one mile walking loop.

PDP Employees...Here’s a handy map to help you keep track of getting in that mile walk on your lunch break!

*Thanks to Jessica Healy, EAP Committee Co-Chair and Research Foundation representative, for sharing this map.*
Take a Break in Your Work Day to Reboot

Taking a lunch break, or even multiple short breaks throughout the day, provides an opportunity for our brains to recuperate. There will be times when one may have to work through breaks. If this happens on a consistent basis, it can have a detrimental affect on your performance at work as well as your health, enjoyment, and your sense of job satisfaction.

Studies were conducted by Emily Hunter (lead author) and Cindy Wu (co-author) from Baylor University in order to determine how well workers performed after taking a break. They surveyed 95 employees between the ages of 22 and 67 over a five day work week. After each break, workers completed short surveys about their break activity and well-being.

Researchers found that timing played a critical factor in workers taking breaks. It was shown that the more hours that elapsed before a break, the less energized people felt. This also led them to experience such symptoms as headaches, eye-strain, and lower back pain. However, after a morning break, employees said that they had more energy, more motivation to return to work, and were better able to concentrate. Hunter and Wu reported that the studies they conducted “show a link between taking breaks and other important outcomes that employers may care about: higher job satisfaction; reduced emotional exhaustion; and greater efforts by employees to undertake work above and beyond their job description.”

Here are some tips on relaxing your brain and enjoying your break from work:

♦ Stand and stretch! Stretching out all of your muscles allows oxygen to flow better though your body and can also wake you up.
♦ Go outside, especially on sunny and warm days, and take a walk to get some fresh air! Taking a walk near a park connects you with nature. Studies have shown that a walk in a quiet park is sufficient enough to refresh our attention spans so we can return to work with renewed focus.
♦ Come join EAP for a lunchtime wellness program to take a break from your work routine, learn important health and wellness information, and interact with other University employees!

Taking breaks during the work day helps us to keep mentally sharp, healthy, and able-bodied. Remember “Office workers who take short, frequent breaks during the workday have more stamina and fewer aches and pains when they return to work.”

To read the full article and learn more about the research on the benefits of taking a break during work, visit http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_154703.html.
EAP’s mission is to help support and maintain a healthy and productive workforce. With that mission in mind, this year we’re embarking on what we hope will be a worthwhile, fun endeavor to highlight our connection to the University and our pride in all that we as employees contribute to make UAlbany a unique place to work.

There are some basic elements of what makes a workplace a “healthy and productive” environment. Employees need to feel valued, find meaning and purpose in their work, feel a sense of pride in what they do and who they work for, and have positive social connections with their co-workers and supervisors/managers. **We all play a role in creating a healthy workplace and in feeling engaged as University employees.**

**How will this project work?**

❖ Each month in the EAP ENews we’ll ask a question or invite you to reflect on some aspect of your connection to UAlbany, your workplace. We’ll use the e-newsletter as a means of sharing some of the comments (and even photos!) that are submitted.

❖ If you’d like to participate by sharing your comments, you’ll go to the EAP website and click on the “Questions and Comments” icon. Be sure to note whether you’d like to include your name on your comment or if you would prefer not to include it.

❖ If you wish to send a photograph along with your comment, follow the directions on the Questions and Comments page about how to submit the photo.

❖ By providing your submissions, you are giving EAP permission to publish your answers, including provided pictures. Please note that all responses may not be published in the EAP ENews due to space considerations. Additional comments/photos may be posted to the EAP website for viewing.

EAP is excited about initiating this endeavor and providing an opportunity to ENGAGE YOU in this ongoing conversation about your connection to UAlbany—this place where we all work together to keep the University thriving!

See the next page for November’s submissions and discover December’s topic!
Here’s what we asked you to respond to in November:

Identify something about working at UAlbany that makes you grateful.

OR. share a special moment when someone expressed gratitude for something you did on the job which made your day!

“The people!! Every single day I come across someone—or, more likely, several people—who remind me why I am so passionate about serving a public research university. Every day I see us pulling together, reaching out, working more strategically, more collaboratively, creatively and nimbly. Every day I see colleagues in every area of our operations making valuable contributions that serve our students and our mission. Every day I am delighted to learn something new and surprising about the great works and transformational experiences we provide at the University at Albany. And every day, without fail, someone makes me laugh—and this I appreciate, for sure! It’s the people that make a university world class. I’m so grateful to be working alongside each of you, whether we have personally met or not. We are a fantastic community of colleagues pulling together to steward this public research university to continue making a truly meaningful impact, here in Albany and around the world. Happy Holidays, everyone! And Go Great Danes!”

~ Leanne Wirkkula

“I am grateful to have the opportunity to work on a team where everyone pitches in, especially during very busy times of the year and when new projects are presented.”

~ Jessica Healy

“I am grateful for University at Albany’s universal access program with CDTA so I can ride the bus to and from work for free!”

~ Erin Sheehan

“What makes me grateful about working here is that my co-workers and the people I have built a relationship with over the years have been at my side for some of the best and some of the worst times in my life. I know that along with my immediate family, many people here I care deeply about. We will always have each other’s backs, either thru a work situation or personal. SUNY is family.”

~ Denise Heiserman

“I am grateful for my new job at UPD at the University. The people here are some of the nicest most amazing people I have worked with here at the University.”

~ Patty Scott

(Winner of the EAP giveaway for participating this month!)
“I am grateful for the wonderful, intelligent, caring group of people I work with everyday. I am also grateful that I get to work in a department where everyone values collaboration and innovation in serving our students and our staff.”

~ Doreen Crosby

“I am grateful to work with an amazing team of people who feel more like family than co-workers!”

~ S.D.

“I am grateful for you, Brenda (Seckerson), and all that you do for all of us at the University. You help us and our families in more ways than you know. Even those of us that don’t contact you directly about assistance are helped by your monthly newsletters, activities, and web resources. Thank you for the excellent job that you do to make our jobs seem less like we work for an organization and more like we work for a large family that cares about us and our wellbeing.

~ UAlbany Employee

“Gratitude is one of those things often talked about, but not something often practiced. I wake up every day grateful to have found a rewarding career at such a great institution. Is every day a good day? Of course not. But that doesn't change the fact that I'm still grateful for it. I'm grateful to have a job, grateful for another day to enjoy that job, and grateful for all the dedicated professionals that work here. I found that a positive mindset yields positive results!!”

~ Jennifer Fila

“On being thankful, I'd like to encourage colleagues who are struggling right now at work or at home. When fairly new to UAlbany, I worked for a boss who was challenging. I wondered why it was my lot in life to be paired with Mr. Cranky Pants. Five long years later, I moved on to another position at UAlbany and still today maintain a close, rich friendship with someone I met during those five years. I can’t imagine my life without her now! So if you too are finding it hard to be thankful ... look around. Focus on the people who greet you with a smile and make the bumps in the work-day road bearable!”

~ Ms. Positive Attitude

December’s Topic...

Let’s reflect on 2015. What stands out as the most meaningful or inspiring thing that you experienced on the job at UAlbany this year?

To submit your response, click on the “Questions and Comments” icon on the EAP website or click here to share your comment. Then be sure to read the January edition of the EAP ENews to learn what other UAlbany faculty and staff contributed!
Healthy Holiday Appetizer

Contributed by Seema Mathura, EAP Office Work Study Student

This month is full of the holiday spirit, warmth, gift-giving, and celebration. So why not treat yourself (and others) to a healthy gift that is fun to look at and healthy to eat without sacrificing taste! Try creating a Roasted Beet Crostini.

Beets are nature's way of providing us with gorgeous color. This root vegetable is high in immune-boosting vitamin C, fiber, and essential minerals like potassium (important for healthy nerve and muscle function) and manganese (which is good for your bones, liver, kidneys, and pancreas). Beets also contain the B vitamin folate which helps reduce the risk of birth defects. In this recipe, every part of the beet will be utilized, maximizing health benefits!

Heard of goat cheese? Goat cheese, like goat milk, is easier on the human digestive system and lower in calories, cholesterol, and fat. In addition, goat cheese is a good source of calcium, protein, vitamin A, vitamin K, phosphorus, niacin, and thiamin.

Combining these two wonderful ingredients not only makes a tasty crostini spread, but your body will thank you for the generous addition of nutritional benefits you’ll receive!

Ingredients:

- 1 bunch beets with greens attached
- 16 1/2-inch-thick slices baguette, preferably whole-grain, cut on the diagonal
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon of red-wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 4 ounces creamy goat cheese
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Trim greens from beets, reserving stems and greens. Place the beets in a baking pan, cover with foil, and roast until very tender when pierced with a knife, 45 minutes to 1 1/2 hours, depending on the size of the beets. Uncover and let cool. Reduce oven temperature to 350°.
3. While the beets cool, arrange baguette slices in a single layer on a large baking sheet. Bake, turning the slices over once halfway through, until toasted but not browned, about 14 minutes.
4. Thinly slice the beet green stems and finely chop the leaves; keep stems and leaves separate. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the stems and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 3 minutes. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and garlic and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 15 seconds. Add the greens, vinegar and water and cook, stirring occasionally, until the greens are tender and the liquid has evaporated, 4 to 5 minutes. Stir in salt and remove from the heat.
5. Peel the cooled beets and cut into 1-inch pieces. Place 3/4 cup beet pieces, goat cheese and pepper in a food processor or blender and puree until smooth.
6. To assemble crostini, spread about 2 teaspoons beet-cheese spread on each slice of toasted baguette and top with sautéed greens! Enjoy!

Saying Good-bye to 2015...

As we say good-bye to 2015, we would like to thank you for your participation at the various EAP-sponsored events this year. Throughout the year, we received wonderful feedback about the programs offered, appreciation for the monthly EAP E-News, and helpful suggestions of resources to share. Your support and involvement with EAP helps to enhance our sense of community on campus and contributes to the overall well-being of our workplace.

The EAP Committee and I wish you and your family a safe and joyful holiday season. We look forward to continuing to serve you in 2016!

Brenda Seckerson, EAP Coordinator

EAP Committee Members:

Jessica Healy & Linda Gallagher (Co-Chairs)
Deborah Altrock
Monica Bartoszek
Kimberly Comproski
Jennifer Fila
Catherine Klose (recording secretary)

Merissa Mabee
Maryann Murray-Wygel
Brendon Phillips
Mary Zeno

We’ll be back in 2016! Until then...
Thank you!

EAP thanks the following for their sponsorship and support of our first Stress Less Week event.

- The President’s Office
- Campus Center Management and Facilities
- EAP Committee Members
- UAlbany Catering
- All of the employees who attended!

Brenda Seckerson, EAP Coordinator
442-5483  bseckerson@albany.edu
EAP Website:  http://www.albany.edu/eap

EAP sponsored events and services are open to UAlbany & Research Foundation faculty, staff, family members, UAS employees, retirees and GSEU members.

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