Fun Things to Do When Gathering Together

During the holiday season, many of us find ourselves spending time with family and friends. During any time of the year when we are gathered together, it can be hard to come up with new and fun things to do. Why not wind down and enjoy some simple, no cost or inexpensive activities and enjoy spending time rather than money together. Here are some suggestions to explore.

- Make a snowman
- Have a snow ball fight
- Surprise someone with breakfast in bed
- Spend some time at a local park
- Set up a scavenger hunt for the kids (or adults!) inside or outside
- Have a game night
- Have movie night at home together
- Bake cookies together and deliver some to a friend or neighbor
- Check local stores and libraries for free activities
- Give massages at home
- Visit a museum
- Take a drive around different neighborhoods to enjoy the holiday lights
- Gift a gift that does not cost any money (write a note, do a chore or babysit for someone)

- Get index cards and write each person’s name on the top and pass the cards around and have each person write one thing they like about that person
- Write a thank you note to someone
- Tell someone that you love them

~Submitted by Linda Gallagher, EAP Committee Co-Chair, UUP Representative

EAP Wellness Calendars Are Now Available!

Happily, EAP is able to continue its annual tradition of providing employees with a FREE wellness calendar. The calendar is colorful and offers an array of tips for your health and well-being that will help you throughout the year. To request a copy be sent to you via campus mail, call the EAP Office 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.
Managing Holiday Stress

Although it’s easy to envision a marvelous, relaxed holiday season full of pageantry, positivity, and perfect pies, this is not what the splendor of the season always delivers. For many, this time of year is the most stressful.

If you feel stressed out by the thought of holiday chores, obligations, and the family dropping in for a spell—or if this year’s circumstances make the holiday season difficult for whatever reason—start preparations now to manage your holiday stress.

**Holiday Myth Busters —**

Along with good tidings come high expectations based on the commercialization of the holiday season, past childhood memories we may long to duplicate, and the expectations of others. If family members count on your “holiday magic” to make every year special—the cooking, cleaning, baking, decorating, and gift-wrapping—you face a bigger challenge letting go or finding balance.

Here’s how to cope better with expectations, demands, and added pressure during the holidays.

**Decision Time —**

Make a decision to take charge and tackle holiday stress. This mentally prepares you to enjoy the time while facing demands of the season with better endurance.

**Your Priorities —**

Decide on your priorities to make the season meaningful. Did you miss the tour of homes last year because the Waltons next door had their open house on the same day? The idea here is to plan a few “non-negotiable” events for yourself.

**Now the Rest —**

What activities are important to your family this year? Seek to trim the “idea tree” to reduce stress from trying to fit it all in. A family meeting to gather ideas can work, and chances are activities you thought everyone still wanted are no longer of interest.

**Avoid the Rush —**

Are holiday lights on the house critical? If yes, go for it, but if it seems more like a “chore” than a pleasurable task, that’s a clue about its priority and importance to you. Activities that feel like chores get delayed. Pay attention to procrastination. It is insight to help you decide whether it’s thumbs up or down on something that seems desirable.

**Fight the Blues —**

If the holidays are a sad time of year because of difficult memories or because a loved one can’t be there, then discover a personal intervention strategy. Volunteering for a local charity is an interactive experience, and those who’ve tried it claim it works to lift one’s mood. You’ll feel empowered and more positive, and the experience of helping others anchors you to a memory that lasts.

**Navigating Family Conflict —**

If you can’t avoid holiday gatherings with family members who experience feuds and conflicts, try discussing with them your desire to avoid conflict. Be up front and ask that differences be set aside. Older adults criticizing teenagers is a famous trigger. So are statements from in-laws that appear critical, interfering, or meddlesome. Self-awareness is power, so you stand a good chance of at least minimizing this behavior.

**Take Care of Yourself —**

What improves your mood—exercise, positive affirmations, alone time? During the year, have you been promising to do something for yourself but keep putting it off? Do it. The holiday season is a perfect time to reaffirm your love, not only for those you care about but also for yourself.

**EAP Can Help —**

Holiday stress affects everyone differently, so suggestions here may not match what’s unique for you. Don’t face the stress alone. Contact UAlbany EAP to help you find the resilience and strength you need to face any challenge the holidays may bring.

bseckerson@albany.edu  EAP Office # 442-5483
Holiday Cheer

When it comes to alcohol, less is more

During the holidays, alcohol is consumed in various forms when celebrating the holiday season. Numerous parties and other festivities prompt people to drink more than usual during this time of year. This can eventually lead to a lot of intoxicated individuals due to a low tolerance for alcohol. Sharing some holiday cheer can become not so “cheerful” of a time! However, making responsible choices around sensible drinking are crucial to having a safe and fun time. Here are some helpful hints to experience more enjoyment when choosing to drink.

• Say no to drinking. A simple “no thank you” can be the best way to stay alcohol free if you feel uncomfortable or are not in the mood to drink. Don’t feel just because alcohol is provided, that you must be obligated to drink it to have a good time.
• Eat food before or during your consumption of alcohol. Eating high protein foods can help slow down the absorption of alcohol in your system, making it unlikely for you to get drunk.
• Drink in moderation. If you do choose to drink, you should know how high your tolerance level is. It would also be helpful to plan accordingly how many drinks you can consume.
• Be aware of unfamiliar drinks. Some drinks can be deceiving in terms of alcohol content. If you are unsure of a drink, simply sip something else. A non-alcoholic drink would be best in this situation.
• Designate a driver. It is best to decide before drinking who can be the designated driver for the night. Be aware that drinking and driving is not an option.

You can ensure an enjoyable, relaxing, and safe time if you drink responsibly. Happy holidays!


~Article contributed by Tenasia Rampersant, EAP Office Work Study Student

Festive Fruit Punch

Here’s a non-alcoholic punch recipe from the My Recipes website that can help to make your holiday gathering more festive! The recipe originally appeared in the December 2005 edition of Cooking Light.

Ingredients:

4 cups of tonic water
3 cups ice cubes
2 cups pineapple juice, chilled
2 cups orange juice, chilled
2 cups light cranberry juice cocktail, chilled
1 lime, sliced
1 orange, sliced
1 carambola (star fruit) sliced

Combine all ingredients in a pitcher. Serve immediately.

Yield: 10 servings (serving size: about 1 cup)
Sometimes an issue at home or work can have an effect on your ability to be as productive as you need to be. 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 as an employee benefit.

Here are just a few of the concerns or stressors that might prompt an employee to reach out to EAP for information and support:

- Family, parenting, and relationship issues
- Work stress and conflict
- Substance abuse or dependency
- Elder Care
- Psychological Concerns (e.g., depression, anxiety)
- Legal and/or financial concerns
- Grief and loss
- Therapist referrals

**Early intervention is the key! Contact EAP.**

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

Brenda Seckerson,  
UAlbany EAP Coordinator  
Call 442-5483  
or email [bseckerson@albany.edu](mailto:bseckerson@albany.edu)

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

“**A ship is safe in harbor, but that’s not what ships are for.**”

~William Shedd  
Theologian, (1820-1894)
As we wind down 2013, we would like to thank you for your attendance at the various EAP-sponsored events this year and for the many comments about and the contributions to the monthly *EAP E-News*. Your participation and involvement in these EAP efforts helps to enhance our sense of community and overall well-being in the workplace.

The EAP Committee and I wish you and your family a safe and joyful holiday season. We look forward to continuing to support your health and well-being and serving you in 2014!

Brenda Seckerson, EAP Coordinator

**EAP Committee Members:**
Jessica Healy & Linda Gallagher (Co-Chairs)
Pamela Moniz
Jo-Ann Moshier
Maryann Murray-Wygel
Marlene Williams
Paul Berger
Michelle Bowen
Linda Gallagher
Kathy Gurney
Merissa Mabee
The winter months are the perfect time to snuggle up with a cup of tea or hot chocolate and a good book. Yes, some of us still like to pick up a real book and not just use our e-readers! The EAP Lending Library covers a variety of topics that might peak your interest. Here are just a few titles to consider for your wintertime reading...

- The Last Lecture
- My Stroke of Insight
- Creative Journal Writing
- Tomorrow Begins Today: African American Women as We Age
- The Seasons of a Man’s Life
- The Nature Principle: Reconnecting with Life in a Virtual Age
- 10 Simple Solutions to Worry: How to Calm Your Mind, Relax Your Body & Reclaim Your Life
- The Mindful Way through Depression!
- Awakening from Grief
- 101 Things I Wish I knew When I Got Married: Simple Lessons to Make Love Last
- Too Young to Retire: 101 Ways to Start the Rest of Your Life
- 20 Something 20 Everything
- The Happiness Advantage
- Dignity: The Essential Role it Plays in Resolving Conflict

For Your Reading Pleasure...

Looking for a good book to read? Borrow a book (or two!) from the historical fiction display, first floor, of the University Library. Bring your University ID card to check out books.

http://libguides.library.albany.edu/historicalfiction

For more book titles, click here.

To discover what CDs and DVDs are available from the EAP Lending Library, click here. Contact the EAP Office to make arrangements to stop by to browse. Or, you may request materials be sent to you via campus mail. bseckerson@albany.edu
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 within operable 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/

Reminder...
The New York State STAR Program has changed.

New legislation requires all homeowners receiving a Basic STAR exemption* to register with the New York State Tax Department in order to receive the exemption in 2014 and subsequent years.

- Homeowners will not have to register in order to receive their 2013 STAR exemptions.
- Homeowners will not have to re-register every year. Based on the information provided in the registration process, the Tax Department will monitor homeowners' eligibility in future years.

**DEADLINE to register is December 31, 2013.** For all of the details and online registration, go to:
http://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/star13/default.htm

*The Basic STAR Program...

- Is available for owner-occupied, primary residences where the resident owners' and their spouses income is less than $500,000
- Exempts the first $30,000 of the full value of a home from school taxes

For more information, go to: http://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/star/index.htm

The world within reach
UAlbany Employee Assistance Program

6-Hour Defensive Driving Class

Thursday, December 12
9:00 am - 3:30 pm
Room 110A
School of Public Health
(includes a half hour lunch break)

Instructor: Sharon Simonik

This 6-hour class can help to reduce your car insurance rates over a three year period or deduct points from your license.
NYS requires attendance for the full 6 hours to receive credit.
Course Fee: $22.00
Make check out to: NTSI
Submit payment with registration and send to EAP Office/MSC # 200.
Registration deadline: Friday, December 6

NOTE: Employees need supervisor’s approval to attend and usage of accruals.

To Register Contact:
Brenda Seckerson, EAP Coordinator
bseckerson@albany.edu

CALL 442-5483 OR REGISTER ONLINE
http://www.albany.edu/eap/event_sign-up.htm

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

THE WORLD WITHIN REACH
With the New Year not far off, many people will soon be thinking about their new year’s resolutions. There is no better time to think about making positive changes in your life, even if you’ve made the same resolution in the past. Maybe, just maybe, with more perseverance and vision, this time your resolution will become long term.

You might have a tendency to set your goals too high at first simply because it’s a fresh idea and you feel excited and motivated by the thought of accomplishing it. For instance, instead of telling yourself you’ll lose 20 pounds, period, be more practical and say you’ll start by losing two pounds a week, which is more realistic. Or start an exercise program gradually—one or twice a week and increase your hours as your body adjusts to working out. Just keep in mind that when your goal involves your health and/or physical changes, slow and steady beats fast and fluctuating every time!

When it comes to practicing more intangible goals, e.g., kindness, patience, good will, volunteering, sharing more time with loved ones or becoming more engaged in the world around you—these goals can quite easily become a habit if you train yourself to be mindful of them. And the unintended reward will be a feel-good factor of self-satisfaction.

On the lighter side of New Year’s goals and resolutions, below is an excerpt, including some personal thoughtful quotes and a poem, published in “Here, There, and Everywhere” from the magazine Psychology Today by Dr. Stephanie Sarkis.

Making resolutions is a cleansing ritual of self-assessment and repentance that demands personal honesty and, ultimately, reinforces humility. Breaking them is part of the cycle. - Eric Zorn

New Year’s eve is like every other night; there is no pause in the march of the universe, no breathless moment of silence among created things that the passage of another twelve months may be noted; and yet no man has quite the same thoughts this evening that come with the coming of darkness on other nights. - Hamilton Wright Mabie

For last year’s words belong to last year’s language and next year’s words await another voice. - T.S. Eliot

Ring out the old, ring in the new, Ring, happy bells, across the snow: The year is going, let him go; Ring out the false, ring in the true. - Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each new year find you a better man. - Benjamin Franklin

Another fresh new year is here . . .
Another year to live!
To banish worry, doubt, and fear,
To love and laugh and give!
This bright new year is given me
To live each day with zest . . .
To daily grow and try to be
My highest and my best!
I have the opportunity
Once more to right some wrongs,
To pray for peace, to plant a tree,
And sing more joyful songs!

- William Arthur Ward

~Submitted by Kathy Gurney, EAP Committee Member, CSEA Representative
Getting Through the Holidays When Grieving

When grieving the loss of a loved one, the holidays can be an especially difficult time. Family rituals take on a different feeling when someone is missing. The expectations of a season that is supposed to be filled with “holiday cheer” can put pressure on those who are not grieving, let alone those who are dealing with loss. For those who are grieving, it is important to be mindful of your needs and to be gentle with yourselves. The article on the Delaware Hospice website titled “16 Tips for Coping with Grief through the Holidays” written by Dr. Judy Pierson offers some wonderful ideas and guidance on how to make your way through the season.

Locally, our region’s Community Hospice offers free bereavement support. For information about its services, contact UAlbany EAP.

DON’T CHEAT YOUR SLEEP

Research strongly points to the existence of a harmful protein interaction in the brain that may cause Alzheimer’s. Research now suggests that sleep is the body’s way of doing away with these accumulated proteins. Less sleep equals inadequate disposal of these harmful buildups. When you sleep, your body goes into housekeeping mode, sending “waste” out via the liver. Poor sleep is a known factor for ill health, and it may be a contributing risk factor for Alzheimer’s Disease in later years. Check out this video on YouTube from the University of Rochester Medical Center that explains this important research. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96aZtk4hVJM

Source: June 2013, Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease

Disclaimer: Material presented in this newsletter is intended for educational or informational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice of your qualified health professional or promote a business.