Adjusting Your Approach

Unrealistic expectations for the holidays can lead to stress

Perhaps it’s an understatement to say that our lives are busy. As we approach the end of the year when many of us celebrate various holidays, our busyness can intensify and so can our stress levels. But does this really have to be the case?

Unrealistic expectations which can be placed upon us or that we place on ourselves can be the cause of additional stress during this time of year. Elizabeth Lesser, the co-founder of the Omega Institute which is the largest life-long learning center in the U.S. which focuses on health, wellness, spirituality, creativity, and social change, offers three truths about understanding and relinquishing our unrealistic expectations to help us beat the blues. In her article titled “Dealing With Stress, Unrealistic Expectations, and Depression This Holiday Season” she identifies these truths as:

- There is no such thing as a normal holiday.
- The holidays are about joy but also about struggle.
- It’s never too late to have a happy holiday.

Lesser offers some specific tips to help people during the holiday season. They are:

**Work with what you have.** As our lives change, traditions will change as well. Instead of trying to reproduce the exact same old-fashioned holidays of your past, infuse new life into your way of doing things.

**Grieve.** If a friend or family member has recently died, practice the lost art of grieving. Allow yourself to cry, remember, and heal.

**Help others.** Do this not because you should but because it is the best antidote to self-pity and seasonal sadness.

**Be financially responsible.** Don’t close your eyes the next time you use your credit card. Buck the excessive gift-giving ritual and practice simplicity, creativity, and basic human kindness.

**Take care of your body.** Eat well, drink lots of water, exercise, and then be merry.

**Seek help if you need it.** These tips are for those who occasionally feel holiday stress and sadness. If you have a period of more than two weeks where you have ongoing depression, bouts of crying, issues with sleep, and thoughts of death or suicide, seek professional mental health care. Reach out to UAlbany EAP for support and referrals.

As you move through this time of year, keep Lesser’s tips in mind. For her additional insight and tips, check out the full article: [http://www.bestofyoutoday.com/work-and-family/dealing-stress-unrealistic-expectations-and-depression-holiday-season](http://www.bestofyoutoday.com/work-and-family/dealing-stress-unrealistic-expectations-and-depression-holiday-season).

**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.
Great American Smoke Out — November 15

Quitting smoking has never been an easy thing to do. However, more than 3 million people stop smoking every year. Many more are seriously considering quitting due to the many dangers of smoking. The American Cancer Society’s Great American Smoke Out is held each year on the third Thursday of November. The annual event is designed to prompt people to take the leap to quit smoking for one day with the hope that it will lead to many days!

Your journey to smoke-free living will help turn your life around in many positive ways. Take a look at these helpful tips that can lead you on the right path to be smoke-free.

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

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Are You Ready for Retirement?

Are you between the ages of 25-45?

It’s never too early to start planning for retirement! When you’re beginning an investment strategy, you don’t have to know everything about the financial markets, but you should grasp the essentials. Learn the FIVE habits of highly successful investors by attending one of the upcoming EAP Lunchtime Wellness Programs. Join presenter Garrett Eaton from TIAA-CREF and learn techniques you can use when making investment decisions.

Topics will include:

♦ Setting financial goals
♦ Realizing tax advantages
♦ Aiming to reduce risk with diversification
♦ Recognizing the pitfalls of market timing
♦ Understanding the impact of expenses

Program Hosts:
Jessica Healy and Dorota Rozycki, EAP Committee Members, Research Foundation Representatives

Tips to Prepare Yourself to Quit Smoking:

♦ Think about all of the reasons why you want to stop.
♦ Be optimistic. Decide positively that you want to stop.
♦ Acquire strong personal reasons to quit regarding your health and accountability to others.
♦ Engage in activities you can do when you feel urges during your transition phase.
♦ Start to condition yourself physically and mentally; i.e., exercise, get plenty of rest, and eat well.
♦ Plan a date that you want to stop and ask for support from family and friends.

For more tips and tools on how to quit for good, go to:
www.cancer.org (American Cancer Society)
www.nysmokefree.com (NY Smokers’ Quitline)

HELP IS ONLY A PHONE CALL AWAY!

If you are finding it difficult to be as productive as you used to be, perhaps a stressor in your life is impacting your ability to be successful at work. The Employee Assistance Program’s Information, Assessment & Referral Service might be the answer! Take advantage of this free voluntary confidential employee benefit. Support, information, and referrals are available to assist you in finding a way to address your concerns.

If you would like to schedule an appointment for an Assessment & Referral session with Brenda Seckerson, EAP Coordinator, call 442-5483 or email bseckerson@albany.edu

To register: Call 442-5483
Online: http://www.albany.edu/eap/event_sign-up.htm

Uptown Campus:
Wednesday, November 28
12:00 — 1:00 pm
Campus Center, Room 375

East Campus:
Thursday, November 29
12:00—1:00 pm
SPH, Room 110A
Protecting Your Credit and Debit Cards

With the holiday season upon us, the online use of credit and debit cards will certainly increase. What steps do you take to keep your credit and debit cards safe from fraudulent use? Check the five tips below to see how well you are doing and what other steps you can take to be financially secure when shopping online.

Choose a credit card over a debit card. Credit cards offer more protection from identity theft. Depending on the company, liability for fraud from the unauthorized use of your credit card caps at $50 if you report the fraud within 30-60 days. If you use your debit card to purchase items online, a thief can gain access to your checking account before you might even detect there’s been a withdrawal. You might not get all of your money back and most likely it will take awhile to process the refund. So, here’s one time when using a credit card is better than a debit card. Just be sure to pay off the bill each month to avoid debt and those finance charges!

Disposable credit cards are the better choice. Better yet is use a disposable credit card which works like a gift card. You can add more money to it, cut it up once you are finished with it, and not have to connect any personal information to the card. Should someone find it, you will lose any money still on the card but most importantly your identity will be protected.

Check website security. Be sure that the website uses the HTTPS:// URL and not just HTTP://. The “S” means it is a secure site. Additionally, a secure website will show a small lock icon on the lower right corner of the web page.

Shop online at home not in public. Shopping on your home computer and not in a public place like the library, at work, or at a cyber café is the most secure. You know who uses your home computer. On a public computer you have no control about who uses it or what type of spyware or malware that might be on the computer. Be safe...shop at home. And you can even do it while wearing your pajamas! How great is that?

Avoid storing information on websites. Many shopping sites will ask you if you want to store your credit card information for future use. While it certainly is convenient to do so, you leave yourself vulnerable. Should the company have a security breach, your personal information will be on its server making you vulnerable. Take the extra time to input your information each time you shop. Be smart and be safe!


Eating Healthy at Holiday Work Parties

Holiday parties can be great. They give us a chance to take a short break to reconnect with co-workers and let our hair down for a minute. However, they can also be a nightmare for anyone who is trying to eat healthy. Here are some tactics you can use to avoid the “food traps” and keep healthy during holiday work parties:

Come Prepared. If it’s a lunch time party, be sure to eat a healthy breakfast as well as a nutritious mid-morning snack, like an apple. If the party is after work, eat a protein filled lunch with a salad, followed by a nutritious mid-afternoon snack like a handful of almonds. If you prepare, you are likely to enter the party only slightly hungry making it easier to avoid overeating.

Map Out Your Meal. Look over the choices and start with the fruits, veggies, baked, and grilled items and avoid the fried, buttered, cheese or cream items. This can help you fill up on healthier items, leaving less room for high-fat food.

Use the Buddy System. When you are ready for dessert, consider splitting it with a friend. By having someone to share with, you can cut the calories and fat in half and spend a little time catching up with someone. It’s a win-win!

Adapted from the American Heart Association’s “Holiday Health Eating Guide” at http://www.heart.org.
EAP Brochure Racks Get a Makeover

Do you work in the UAlbany Facilities Maintenance Department? Have you checked out the new additions to the EAP brochure racks? This summer new materials were added. EAP is looking out for your health and well-being! If you would like information on a topic that is not covered by any brochure you find in the display rack, please contact the Brenda Seckerson in the EAP Office to conduct research for you. Take advantage of your EAP benefit!

The Giving Season...

New CSEA committee on campus doing outreach

During this time of year, many of us look for opportunities to give to those who need support. The newly created SUNY Albany CSEA Local 691 Women’s Committee has big plans to help our local community! Currently we are collecting items for the Mohawk Hudson Humane Society. Additionally, we plan to have a food drive for the local food pantries before Thanksgiving, followed by a warm clothing collection before Christmas. Keep your eyes open for details and campus drop off locations.

We invite all UAlbany employees to support our first committee projects, and we would love to get new community members (men as well as women). Let us know if you are interested! Contact Christine Barber at cbarber@albany.edu 442-3609 or Nancy Davis at ndavis@albany.edu 442-3616 for more information about the CSEA Local 691 Women’s Committee and our current community projects.

Many thanks to EAP for providing us with the opportunity to get the word out about our newly formed committee and our endeavors.

~ Article submitted by Nancy Davis

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.