

Gift Yourself a Break this Holiday Season

The year may be winding down, but for many of us, this is a time when we're at our most wound up. Calendars get filled, family members visit, and we spend, volunteer, travel, and eat more than most other times of the year. As all of this unfolds, our regular routines and time to ourselves get set further to the side. But the holidays are meant to be enjoyed, not something to simply "get through." Do things differently this year with a few simple strategies to help you manage seasonal stress and anxiety and take good care of yourself.

Address imbalance

If you think about it, what typically sends us into a spin during the holidays is too much or too little of just about everything. Because "it's the holidays," we tend to make unusual concessions for things – whether it's focusing too much on others and not enough on ourselves, spending too little (or way too much) time with family and friends, or offering a lot of yeses and very few nos. To prevent one extreme or another from taking over, recognize when equilibrium is lacking and do what you can to even things out. Be honest with yourself and others – forgo an event or decline a request and allow yourself some additional time when and where you need it.

Set limits

Holiday stress can be especially taxing – on your relationships, your wallet, and your well-being – so it's vital that you set and enforce some boundaries. Whether or not it's intentional, family and friends may take advantage of your generosity and your time, so be clear and consistent from the start about what you can and cannot do or tolerate, or what you do and don't have the time or money for. And speaking of money, setting and sticking to a budget is like establishing a boundary for your bank account. Be realistic and adamant about what you can afford this year, stay mindful of your spending, and avoid giving in to holiday pressures.

Make some "me" time

It's easy to overextend yourself and overcommit during this time of year. If you take a few days away from work around the holidays, try not to fill those days with tons of errands and obligations, as doing so defeats the purpose of having that time to recharge and spend quality time with your loved ones. Schedule some time between your to-dos that's just for yourself and what *you* want or need so you're better able to find balance and truly connect with others when it counts.

Maintain your routines

This is a unique time of year that makes it all too easy to justify skipping the gym, overindulging, staying up late, and putting hobbies on hiatus. Curtail some of the seasonal chaos by adhering to normal routines and schedules as much as possible. Keeping up with your regular workouts and eating habits, staying involved with hobbies, and putting your kids (and yourself) to bed at the usual time throughout the holidays can help prevent an increase in stress and anxiety levels and will make for a much smoother transition back to work and school in the new year.

While it can be a hectic and stressful time, putting you and your well-being first is the best gift you can give yourself. If you feel overwhelmed or stressed or need guidance on managing your time and budget, reach out to your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Consultants are available 24 hours a day (even on holidays) to help you enjoy more of what makes this time of year so special.

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to eligible federal employees at no cost.

24 HOURS A DAY

800-222-0364

TTY: 888-262-7848

foh4you.com