

Making the Holidays Happy:

Participant Packet

Solutions to Everyday Problems

1-800-344-4222

www.concern-eap.com



Making the Holidays Happy

OVERVIEW

You will have the opportunity to examine the sources of stress that often accompany the holiday season and will develop coping strategies to reduce stress and increase enjoyment.

Seminar Agenda:

- Welcome
- The Unique Challenges of the Holiday Season
- Types of Stress and the effects
- Exercises
- Tips to manage and deal with stress
- Wrap Up

Seminar Length: Approximately 1 hour

Unique Challenges

- **People**
- **Places**
- **Things**



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Symptoms of Stress – Fight, Flight, or Freeze

- **Physical:** *fatigue; sore muscles; weight gain/loss; stomach pains.*
- **Mental:** *inability to focus; unrealistic expectations; resistance to change or new ideas.*
- **Emotional:** *anger; crying; depression; anxiety.*
- **Behavioral:** *changes in eating habits; increased alcohol or drug use.*

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Holiday Questionnaire

1. What I dread most about the holiday is...
2. What I look forward to is...
3. My role during the holidays is...
4. I wish the holidays were...
5. During the holidays I'm SUPPOSED to feel...
6. Holidays are SUPPOSED to be...
7. What happens to me during the holidays is...
8. What the kids want most during the holidays is...
9. What my spouse most wants during the holidays is...
10. What I most want during the holidays is...
11. What my parents/in-laws want is...
12. What the boss most wants is...
13. What Santa Clause most wants... (joke)
14. If I could change one thing about the holidays, it would be...
15. My favorite holiday is...
16. If I could start a holiday, I would celebrate...
17. How, with whom, where...
18. When I think about the holidays I feel...
19. During the holidays I feel...
20. After the holidays I feel...
21. What the "kid" in me wants this holiday season is...

Holiday Coping Strategies

- Make a list – of everything you need to buy and do. Check it twice, three times. Don't leave home without it. Shop at “off-peak” times.
- Stick to normal routine – as often as possible. This is particularly important for children – try to keep meal and bed times on “non-holiday” schedule.
- Remember the “Four F’s”: Food, Fun, Fitness, Forty-winks.
- Ask for help – start a baby-sitting exchange so that you can have free time to shop, bake or relax.
- Just say no – remember that you cannot do it all. Over-scheduling can cause frazzled nerves and short tempers.
- Plan ahead – decide what activities are important and eliminate those that aren't. Think back to previous holiday seasons – what worked? What didn't?
- Postpone major life decisions – the holidays are a major event in themselves.
- Remember January – rather than cram all social gatherings and festivities into December, plan some for January – the traditional month of “let-down”.
- Use your EAP – it is there if you need it – before, during and after the holidays.

Altering Your Behavior Patterns

Assert yourself.

Think before you agree. Come up with new ideas, new suggestions that will appeal to others

Keep things structured.

During family gatherings, make “plans for the down time”. Try taking a walk, playing a card game or singing carols. This can minimize the opportunity for conflict.

Keep things in the here and now.

Deal in the present.

Remember you are adults.

Your parents and/or older family members sometimes need reminding that you are no longer a child. Maybe you need to say “no” to a mother who tries to overfeed you or expresses concern about the way you dress.

Challenge tradition.

Often tradition is more a habit than ritual with emotional importance and it may no longer fit with the changes in your life. So, be creative, decide to do something different this year (stay home, go on vacation). Create new traditions with meaning to the way you live. Don’t let ghosts of the past dictate your needs.

Shorten stays with relatives.

Limit stays with family to reduce chance for conflict. Ahead of the holidays, share plans with those involved.

Avoid the caretaker role.

Decide you don’t need to host the dinner, go to everyone’s parties, do all the planning & arrangements, shopping, cooking, wrapping. Delegate, have a potluck. Cut back on social commitments.

Limit gift giving.

Consider cutting back by having a name drawing, trimming names from the list, giving gifts to children only, making homemade items, giving certificates for babysitting, house-sitting, flower arranging (match the coupon to whatever your skill is). You can also give a gift to the family as a whole instead of to each individual.

Decide which rituals have meaning.

Plan with your needs in mind. Be proactive – don’t just let things happen. You be the one to set the pace, select the activities that are important/support your values.

Holiday Action Plan

Directions:

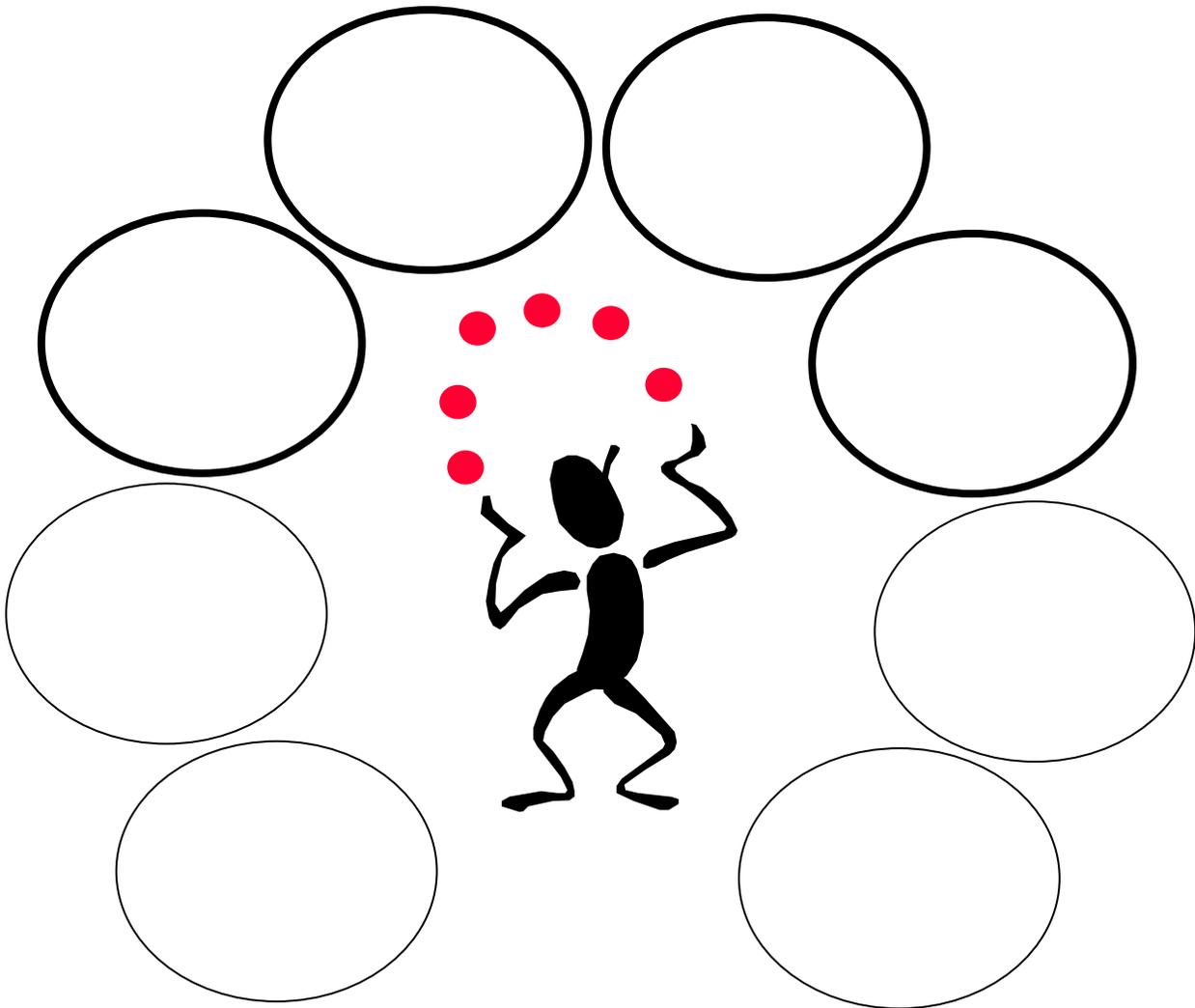
List items, events, family and social commitments in the “to do” column. Next, in the middle column beside each of these items identify “who” needs to complete the task or attend the event. Finally in the third column indicate the timing of the action item.

To Do	By Whom	By When
<u>Tasks and Activities</u>		
<u>Social Gatherings</u>		
<u>Family Obligations</u>		

Juggling Your Life During the Holiday Season

Part I

Write in the circles your major Roles/Responsibilities/Activities (i.e. parent, manager, exercise, school, gift buying, parties) in your life. The bolded circles are year-round roles and the non-bold circles are roles during the Holiday Season.



Juggling Your Life During the Holiday Season

Part II

Pair up with another participant and share your answers at least 3 of the following questions. Have one participant share their thoughts and feelings with the other listening and then switch.

1. Share which balls get added to your life during the Holiday Season?
2. Which ball is the most enjoyable or meaningful for you? Why?
3. Which ball is the most stressful or emotionally charged for you? Why?
4. Which ball do you feel obligated to do but don't enjoy? Why?
5. Are there any balls you would like to drop? Why? Can you?
6. Are there any balls you would like to add or change or substitute for the ones you already have? Why?

Part III

With your partner put on your creative hat and brainstorm ideas for better juggling the balls you have written on your Juggler Page. Discuss any ideas that may have worked for you in the past or worked for friends of yours.

Seminar Evaluation Form

CONCERN: Employee Assistance Program

Please fill out and return to presenter or HR Representative. Your feedback is very important to us. Thank you!

Seminar Title Making the Holidays Happy Company: _____

Date _____ Presenter: _____

Regarding the Seminar	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
1. How well were the seminar objectives met?					
2. Usefulness of seminar information?					
3. Length of seminar?					
4. Effectiveness of exercises?					
5. How would you rate this seminar overall?					

Regarding the Presenter	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Presentation skills?					
2. Ability to answer questions?					
3. Knowledge of subject?					
4. Use of time?					
5. Overall assessment of presenter?					

Additional Comments

1. What would you recommend to make this seminar more effective? _____

2. What part of the seminar did you find most helpful? _____

3. Additional comments/suggestions for speaker's improvement? _____

Thank you for your feedback.