Work-Life Balance During the Holidays

The winter holidays include many welcome aspects of life: fun with family and friends, spiritual celebration, bountiful food and drink, and plenty of warm feelings. However, a busy holiday season can also bring lots of stress if you don’t have a plan for managing it. It’s easy to get stretched thin at this festive time of year. Cooking, cleaning, shopping, children’s school events, office parties, family gatherings, and travel can combine to make the holidays a frenetic period. One of the keys to enjoying a more relaxing holiday season is to have a plan for the situations that often bring you stress.

It is normal to remember the glorious moments of the past and minimize all the work that made it possible. Or conversely, we overemphasize the holiday “catastrophes” of the past which then invade our ability to enjoy the present. Remember, not every holiday needs to be the same exact way we spent the time last year. They can be a challenge if people are dealing with grief, divorce, family members unable to be home, health concerns, financial stress, and other life challenges. Modern families usually do not reflect the picture-perfect images that dominate our media. If we allow TV, social media and celebrity culture to shape our holiday ideas, we may come to believe that everyone else is filled with joy, that children in other families are angelic and that we are the only people with annoying relatives. The following are some tips to help manage the life/work balance during the holidays:

♦ Practice good self-care. This includes listening to your body when it may be trying to tell you that you need more rest/sleep and to eat better. This may also involve making sure you take some time for yourself.

♦ Be realistic in your expectations of yourself and others. Don’t expect others to change how they are just because of the holidays. And also don’t shoot for perfection in the areas of gift-giving, entertaining and meals.

♦ Be grateful/show appreciation. Try to stay focused on the real meaning of the season. This may also include giving back to the community through charity and volunteering.

♦ End each day with new priorities for the following day. Take 10 – 15 minutes at the end of every day to set your priorities for the following day. Because proper work-life balance means that you don’t take work home with you, leaving the office with a sense of accomplishment and focus for the next day will help you relax and enjoy your evening.

♦ Have set work hours and stick to them. Set work hours for yourself and do everything in your power to stick to them. Otherwise, before you know it, you’ll be working until midnight every night.

♦ Ask for help/delegate. Sharing tasks can make things seem more manageable as can breaking projects down into smaller parts.

♦ Prioritize and stay organized. Doing so can greatly decrease one’s stress level. This may also involve keeping an eye on spending.

♦ Watch your food and drink intake. Don’t beat yourself up if you overindulge in food. Avoid skipping meals as this may make overeating more likely. Limit alcohol intake as it may contribute to depressed feelings.

♦ Build downtime into your schedule. When you plan your week, make it a point to schedule time with your family and friends, and activities that help you recharge. Remember that a little relaxation goes a long way.

People deal with different stress throughout the year and especially during the holidays. The EAP can be an oasis for you to find some relief and calm if you are attempting to do too much. Give us a call and schedule some time for you! The EAP is here for you and members of your household as a confidential resource to manage stress or any other life concerns.