



PUT THE BRAKES ON **STRESS**

An illustration of a hand with a light skin tone, palm facing up, reaching from the bottom left towards the center of the page. The hand is outlined in black and has a simple, clean style.

With all that goes on during the holidays, high spirits can quickly switch into high stress. From prepping for visitors and dealing with family conflict, to managing schedules and staying on budget, it's easy to become anxious and overwhelmed. Before the hustle and bustle gets the best of you this year, seek support from your **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** to keep you feeling festive all season long.

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

Strive for connection, not perfection

We all have a vision of what we think the holidays should look like, yet things rarely go exactly as planned. Instead of setting expectations for an ideal outcome, focus your efforts on activities that bring you and your loved ones together. One way to get everyone involved and everything done is by turning tasks into traditions. For example, have each household member, kids included, choose a side dish to make for your family's holiday dinner, and then get everyone in the kitchen to share the experience. You could also get a little help and see friends by hosting an annual cookie swap so each of you only has to bake one kind of cookie each year. Or, gift yourself extra time by divvying up giftwrapping duty into teams so you're not burdened and miss out on enjoying quality time with others. When everyone has a hand in the preparation, not only do you accomplish your to-dos, but you also foster the sense of inclusion and connectedness that defines the holiday season.

Commit carefully

During the holiday season, we often find ourselves trying to be everything to everyone – we feel like we have to attend *all* the parties, contribute to *every* potluck, or donate to the toy drives at work *and* your child's school. This year, plan ahead and be realistic with your ability to commit, then set limits and be choosy about where and how you spend your time, energy, and money.

Reestablish equilibrium

It's easy to fill up your time away from work with tons of errands and obligations at this time of year, but it can defeat the purpose of having that time to recharge and spend quality time with your loved ones. Remember to set aside time for yourself and what you like to do during your holiday break so you are better able to find balance between your work and personal life.

If you need a little help managing the stress of the holidays or finding balance, your EAP is here for you. Call any time, day or night, to speak with a consultant.

We hear about stress all the time, but we may not always recognize the signs until it's too late. Here are some common indicators that you may be reaching your limit:

- Headaches, muscle tension, neck or back pain
- Upset stomach
- Dry mouth
- Chest pains, rapid heartbeat
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite or overeating
- Lack of concentration or focus
- Memory problems, forgetfulness
- Jitters
- Irritability, short temper
- Anxiety

APA.org – Warning Signs of Stress

24
HOURS
A DAY

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