

From the CSC Wellness Team: Holiday Stress Management (courtesy of Ease @ Work)

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or some combination of these, chances are you are starting to have mixed feelings about the holidays. An effort to create the perfect holiday experience for our family can add stress to our already busy lives. Missing a loved one or ones can stir up feelings of loneliness or even depression. Close your eyes, take a deep breath and realize you are not alone!

- Start off by setting **realistic** goals for the holiday season. Adjust traditions and rituals to fit your family's needs and means this year. What was done last year may not fit into the plans this year. Realize this is okay!
- Accept your feelings. It is normal to feel sad around the holidays. As happy as you are to spend time with those around you, it is okay to miss those who have passed or are not able to join you in person. If your feelings start to feel too overwhelming, seek professional help.
- Take time to slow down. Enjoy a book, watch an upbeat holiday movie with the kids, stop for a cup of coffee or write in a journal. Do something that relaxes you and that enjoy, even if is only for a short amount of time.
- Enjoy the reconnection to far away family and friends. Take the time to write a personal note to people who you haven't connected with recently, but often reach out to this time of year. Appreciate opening the mailbox each day to see who sent cards, gifts or well wishes!
- Give of your time and talents. Volunteer your time at a local shelter or food bank. Sponsor a family in need and provide gifts to brighten their holiday.
- Exercise!!! Exercise helps lower stress levels and releases serotonin, the chemical in our brain that makes us happy. Taking the dog or the kids for a walk is an excellent excuse to take a break from a family gathering, if you need one. Wink, wink!

With some patience, planning and many, many deep breaths, the upcoming holiday season can be enjoyable for you!