



934TH AIRLIFT WING

**December 2022
Volume 4 Issue 12**

Prevention Connection: Building a Healthier Community

Inside: Managing the Holidays, Are You Hooked or Unhooked?, Stress-Free Family Holiday Month, Drinking and Driving Safety

Tis the season of gift-giving. If you have kids, you know or have seen the excitement of wrapping paper being thrown about. The toys most kids get are safe, but some are not. It is only fitting that December is Safe Toys and Gifts Awareness Month. Each year, thousands of children are injured due to the gifts they receive. The most common are toys with choking hazards. The top three are plastic coverings or packaging, balloons and balloon pieces, and button batteries. Any of these can cause serious injury and even death. According to Safe Kids Worldwide, in 2016, 174,100 children under the age of 15 were seen in the ER for toy-related injuries. That's 477 kids every day. There are some things you can do to help prevent from having to go for an ER visit. First, consider your child's age when purchasing toys. Read the instructions and warning labels to ensure the toy is right for your child. Second, check to make sure there aren't any small parts that could be a choking hazard. Third, separate toys by age and watch for small parts or game pieces. And lastly, properly store the toy or game when not in use by using a bin or container. It's also important to check items for any recall at www.recalls.gov since there are several recalls every year.

Source: https://www.safekids.org/safetytips/field_risks/toy-safety

Special points of interest:

For more information on Safe Toys and Gifts go to:

<https://child-familyservices.org/december-is-national-safe-toys-and-gifts-month/>

<https://nationaltoday.com/safe-toys-and-gifts-month/#why-we-love>

Managing the Holidays by Liz Swanson

The holidays are meant to be a fun and enjoyable time spent with friends and family. But let's be real, there is a lot of work that comes first. Cooking, baking, shopping, cleaning the house, wrapping presents and oh yea the kids still need to go to hockey practice, the dog chewed through his leash and is loose and everyone keeps asking you that dreaded question "what's for dinner?" [insert scream here]!!!! That's okay my friend, we got you covered. This is a perfect time to put those resiliency skills to use. Below are nine tips from the Mayo Clinic on how to reduce stress during the holidays:

1. Plan ahead.

Between co-workers, friends and family, it's inevitable that some commitments will end up on the same day. Make sure to plan on what you can attend in person or virtually. If you're hosting the holidays, create a menu to help you stay organized and make grocery shopping easier.

2. Say no.

With holiday commitments, it is OK to say no to a few or all of them. It also will help relieve some stress. Try sharing your to-do list with other family members.

3. Plan spending.

The holidays mean spending money. Make a budget and stick to it. Spending money on your loved ones is important, but it's also important to pay your energy bill. Don't buy gifts that you'll be paying off for the rest of the year.

4. Create relaxing surroundings.

Turn on some music, light some candles or open the windows on a sunny day. Research has found that listening to music and the scent of citrus can boost feelings of well-being, and vitamin D is always a happiness booster.

5. Maintain healthy habits.

The holidays are notorious for ruining healthy habits. A short workout each morning will help your decision-making throughout the day. Encourage your family to try snow shoeing or sledding to get in extra exercise. Eat healthy snacks like fresh fruit or vegetables throughout the season and to fill up before a dinner party or celebration with tempting, but unhealthy, foods. *(Continued on next page.)*

Managing the Holidays by Liz Swanson

(Continued from previous page.)

6. Share feelings.

Spending a holiday after a loss in the family can be difficult. Accept your feelings and open up about them to others. It may make you feel better to share. Try to switch up old traditions to ease the loss.

7. Respect differences.

Family members will have different viewpoints than your own. Try your best to forgive and forget this holiday season. Focus on your similarities, and replace tension with something productive.

8. Be realistic.

You are only one person, and you can only do so much. Be realistic with how much you can handle this season. Forget about perfection, and relax and enjoy the company surrounding you.

9. Take a break.

Don't forget about your own needs. Take a nap, go for a short walk, read a book or watch a funny movie. Laughing relaxes the whole body, and can relieve physical tension and stress.

Source: Reisner, P., M.D. (2021, December 3). 9 Tips to Fend off Holiday Stress. *Mayo Clinic Health System*. Retrieved from <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/fend-off-holiday-stress-with-these-tips>



“Rule number one is, don’t sweat the small stuff. Rule number two is, it’s all small stuff.”

~ Robert Eliot

Are You Hooked or Unhooked? by Mike Sanford

Not long ago, it was recommended that I read the book, “The Happiness Trap” by Dr. Russ Harris. Because there are so many books on how to be happy, I thought this would be a different way to look at happiness. I mean, is there a trap for being happy?

Dr. Harris is a world renowned trainer of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. This type of therapy is good for just about anyone but is best for those experiencing anxiety, depression, substance misuse and abuse, loneliness, and grief and loss. It helps you overcome negative thoughts that your mind creates. There’s a reason your mind creates these negative thoughts. It tries to protect you and keep you safe from unwanted threats, including things like fear of failure, fear of being alone, fear of conflict, etc. The brain’s number one job is to protect you and keep you safe. For example, if you have a fear of failure, your brain will tell you, “Why bother trying because you won’t be successful?” By not trying, you protect yourself of failing and the negative emotions that come with it. The problem with this type of thinking is that it can cause negative feelings and behaviors.

If you think about it (no pun intended), all thoughts are just words. On average, the human mind has tens of thousands of thoughts each day. Those thoughts (words) either help you or they hurt you. Either they help you move towards what matters to you or they don’t. Each time you have a negative thought, you want to “unhook” that thought (Harris, 2022). “The primary aim of unhooking is to free you from the tyranny of your mind, so you can invest your time, energy, and attention in more important things.” (Harris, 2022, p. 94)

How do you get out of the cycle of negative thoughts? Your thoughts are your thoughts, they don’t go away. Therefore, you can’t suppress them and you can’t ignore them. They will always come back and usually with a vengeance. You have to simply acknowledge them for what they are...just words. According to Harris, there are techniques you can use to overcome some of these negative thoughts.

One technique is called dropping anchor (Harris, 2022). You do this by using the acronym, ACE. First, you Acknowledge the Thought, such as “I’m having the thought of I’m not good enough.” Once you are aware of the thought, you can move on. Second, Connect with Your Body by using a mindfulness trick. Use whatever works best for you. I like to imagine I’m breathing in and out of my heart. And third, Engage the Senses. What do you hear? What does your skin feel? What do you see when you close your eyes? These help distract you.

There are several other techniques, but this is one that can get you started. So the next time you have a negative thought, drop anchor and see what happens. It usually only takes seconds to overcome that negative thought. But it does take practice. So practice each day.

Source: Harris, R. (2022). *The Happiness Trap* (2nd. ed.). Chatswood, NSW, Australia: Exisle Publishing.

Stress-Free Family Holiday Month by Eric Neal

December is National Stress-Free Holiday Month. Some people might ask, how could December be the month identifying as stress-free? Considering many of the stressors associated with the holiday season, from travel, gifts, dinners, and possibly missing loved ones, you might be correct to question December as a month to be stress-free.

Outside of working out every opportunity I can, I must admit I don't serve the best example of living a stress-free life as my personality is type A to the max as I like to strive for perfection to achieve excellence. Although I can't profess to being the best example of living stress-free, every year during holiday season, I visit my family and let them know I'm going to be lazy, sleep in every day, and relax while enjoying my time away from work. In order to achieve this, I ensure everything that needs to be done is handled in advance to avoid worrying about a load of work upon returning after my vacation. Plus, I always like to take a couple of extra days of leave once I get back to Minnesota after a long drive.

According to Chloe Smith from West Virginia University, additional considerations can be implemented to manage holiday expectations. She recommends the following: the season is more about creating memories, keep a realistic budget, have a plan, delegate tasks, take a break from social media, avoid crowds, accept only invitations that you are excited to attend while politely declining events that could cause stress, and make time for yourself. She's also provided the advice of exercising, avoiding isolation, and taking care of and tending to your mental health.

The guidance she provides for grief is that its okay to have these feelings and not to be pressured to follow through with family traditions. Her last recommendation is to volunteer, donate, and lead by example by spreading the holiday cheer. I agree with her guidance for managing stress during the holiday season and think it would be a great idea to implement all year long.

Source: Smith, C. (2019, December 17). National Stress-Free Holiday Month. *West Virginia University, Carruth Center*. Retrieved from <https://carruth.wvu.edu/carruth-blog/2019/12/17/national-stress-free-family-holiday-month>



“Acknowledging the good that you already have in your life is the foundation for all abundance.”

~ Eckhart Tolle



**PLEASE DON'T
DRINK & DRIVE THIS
HOLIDAY SEASON**

1. Take the night off from drinking
2. Pick a designated driver
3. Give someone your keys
4. Know your limits, pace yourself
5. Don't drink on an empty stomach
6. Stop drinking 90min before leaving
7. Give yourself time to sober up
8. Call a friend to pick you up
9. Take an UBER or public transit
10. Spend the night

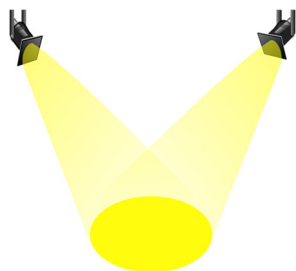
Sources:

Guide, Inc. (2022). Retrieved from: <https://guideinc.org/2021/12/01/help-keep-impaired-drivers-off-the-road-this-holiday-season/>

Miami-Dade County (2022). Safety Tips: Driving During the Holidays. Retrieved from <https://www.miamidade.gov/global/fire/safety-driving-during-the-holidays.page>

“I didn't start MADD to deal with alcohol. I started MADD to deal with the issue of drunk driving.”

~ Candy Lightner



Resource Spotlight

IdentityTheft.gov—If you've been a victim of identity theft this is the site to go to. IdentityTheft.gov is the federal government's one-stop resource for identity theft victims. The site provides streamlined checklists and sample letters to guide you through the recovery process. There are several steps that need to be taken when identity theft occurs. The Federal Trade Commission is the governing agency for IdentityTheft.gov. You will need a recovery plan and a way to put that plan into action.

Prevention Partners/Response:

Violence Prevention: 713-1159

Sexual Assault Response Coordinator:
713-1315

Director of Psychological Health:
713-1224

Military & Family Readiness: 713-1516

Personal Financial Counselor:
612-297-2826

Chaplain Corps: 713-1226

Equal Opportunity: 713-1221

Exercise Physiologist: 713-1472

Security Forces (BDOC): 713-1101

Military One Source: 1-800-342-9647

DoD Safe Helpline: 1-877-995-5247

Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-8255

National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-799-7233

National Human Trafficking Resource
Center: 1-888-373-7888

App* Spotlight and Self-Care Strategy—Add this to your Tool Box!



The ACTCoach© app is a Department of Veterans Affairs affiliated app. It was developed by the VA's National Center for PTSD. It is “designed to help people accept internal experiences such as thoughts, emotions, memories, and sensations”, while assisting people to make, keep, and reflect their “personally held values”. There are several features within the app that are helpful, such as practicing mindfulness, living your values, the use of metaphors, choosing goals, and using psychological flexibility. ACT helps you live with unpleasant thoughts, feelings, and impulses without avoiding them or being controlled by them so that you can be a happier version of you.

*The DOD and Air Force does not endorse any product listed.