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## Bouncing Back After the Holidays

Planning for the holiday season usually begins as soon as we close the door on the last little trick or treat on Halloween night. Then, it seems as if every day in November and December is jammed packed with things to do, places to go, and people to see, and that's in addition to our "normal" work routine! How quickly those two months fly by! What a relief it is to get back to our routines after the stress and hectic schedules during the holiday season. Or is it?

Many people suffer from the post-holiday blues which, depending on the individual, can vary in duration and intensity. The post-holiday blues can manifest themselves as soon as we begin to remove that first ornament from the tree. Employees returning to work after their holiday vacation seem to have a different demeanor; gone is the rush in their step, the glimmer in their eyes, the smiles on their faces and their overall peace-and-goodwill-toward-mankind attitude. It's back to reality.

Getting back to reality doesn't have to bring us down, cause us sadness or bring on the blues. To overcome those post holiday blahs, consider the following tips:

- 1. Keep Planning.** Remember, many of us started planning for the holidays back in October which contributed to our anticipation and enjoyment of the season. Don't stop planning just because the holiday season is over. What is it you want to do next; something you would look forward to doing? Keep in mind that the anticipation and planning of an event is often as much fun as the event itself!
  - Plan your next vacation
  - Plan a week-end get away
  - Plan a themed party
- 2. Set Some SMART Goals.** It's a new year, what goals would you like to set for yourself? These goals might be personal, professional, physical, or financial. Have some fun with these goals; they don't have to be boring! Regardless of the type of goals you set, make sure they are S-M-A-R-T.
  - S = Specific
  - M = Measurable
  - A = Achievable
  - R = Results-oriented
  - T = Time-based deadline
- 3. Eat Healthy.** Yes, it's confession time. For many of us, the holidays serve as a green light for overindulgence. Festive holiday foods loaded with fat and refined sugars zap our energy and deprive us of the nutrients our bodies need. It's now time to get back to what we know is the healthy way to eat in order for us to be healthy. Focus on fresh fruits and vegetables, unprocessed foods; meals high in protein and low in simple carbohydrates and sugars; and be sure to drink plenty of water.

4. **Exercise.** Don't be too hard on yourself if you've deviated from your normal exercise routine over the holidays. If you had a routine, get back to it. If you didn't have an exercise routine, now is a great time to start with at least 20 minutes of exercise 4-5 times per week. Load your iPod with music that makes you want to get up and move! You don't have to run a marathon; just do something to get moving.

If you belong to a gym, that's great, but remember exercise does not have to be expensive to be worthwhile; walking around your block or in a park doesn't cost anything but your time. Additionally, walking outside provides other great benefits. We're breathing fresh air, getting some Vitamin D from the sun, and the sunlight is releasing neurotransmitters in the brain that have a direct positive affect on our moods.

5. **Keep That Giving Spirit Alive.** Doing for, and thinking of others shouldn't be a concept exclusive to the holiday season. Being kind and doing kind things for others makes us feel good and can promote our overall well being. Beat your blues by thinking of others and how you can continue to make a positive difference in someone else's life all year long. That's bound to put a smile on your face *and* in your heart!
  - Volunteer at a homeless shelter, animal shelter, or hospital
  - Help an elderly neighbor or friend in need
  - Clean your closets of unwanted or unused useful items or clothing and donate them to a charitable organization

In addition to these suggestions, always know that your EAP is available, knowledgeable, and eager to help you cope with any feelings of loss, sadness, or regret that might follow the holiday season. Don't struggle with these feelings – call your EAP and begin the healing process.