



CENTERSTONE

Wellness Program

Five Ways to Handle Holiday Hazards



Holidays are a time to enjoy traditions, family, friends and connectedness. However, we often let our behaviors prevent us from making the most of a special season. The likely result may be regret, resentment or simply tons of stress on us and our families.

Here are five examples holiday hazards with tips to minimize these behaviors, reduce stress and enjoy the holiday season.

Perfectionists: Be Flexible

Your homemade southern cornbread dressing may be the biggest hit of your family's annual holiday gathering, but your new mother-in-law believes dressing should include a lot of sage. You believe that reducing sage in your recipe is what makes it taste best. Accept that you can't please everyone all the time. Learn to host gatherings in a different way. Apply the potluck model to holiday parties. Delegate tasks to others and don't be overambitious. Don't make the mistake of trying to do too much.

Family Feud Finders: Be Forgiving

During the holidays there are many opportunities for family togetherness, and that's usually a good thing. Many of us travel to visit family we don't see very often. Spending time reconnecting and bonding with family is part of what makes the holiday season special. However, family time can cause stress and hurt feelings, especially when dealing with family dynamics that include power struggles, passive aggressiveness and a lack of understanding. These are all very common problems, even in very loving families. Sometimes combining families can cause more dysfunction than delight. Try to accept family members as they are, even if they don't live up to your expectations. Create meaningful moments by loosening expectations and being open to differences.

Shop-'til-you-drop Spenders: Be Creative

Avoid financial fiascos by creating and sticking to a budget. We tend to mistakenly associate the price of gifts with the significance of the recipient. Be creative when planning gift exchanges with friends or family. Draw names so each person buys only one gift. Or set a price limit so no one is tempted to over spend. Reduce your holiday shopping by purchasing all gifts at one store. For example, buy everyone on your gift list a book based on their interests. Spend less money and more time with people you care about. Over spending always creates additional stress when the bills arrive.

Chow Down Champions: Plan Better

We all know the feeling of a full stomach after a huge holiday dinner. You don't have to feel guilty for indulging in holiday foods. A better plan will help you avoid guilt. Approach the holiday dinner table prepared to share conversation or stories. This tactic will derail your mouth from eating a second serving of mashed potatoes! Use smaller serving utensils so your plate won't tower with massive scoops of all seven side items. There is always a price to pay when over eating. Plan your day and your meal time with intention. Keep your eye on your belt, not the bread!

Greedy Guests: Be Grateful

Kindness and consideration should not be forgotten during holiday celebrations. Express gratitude for even the smallest gestures of giving, planning and preparing. Acknowledge hosts, those who prepared the meal and those who provided decorations for the occasion. If you are an overnight guest in someone's home, end your stay by leaving the space a little nicer than when you arrived. Clean your guest room as a display of gratitude for your host. This will minimize your stress, and allow you to share the warmth of a grateful heart. Gratitude is at the center of any celebration.

Centerstone (615) 460-HELP (4357)

About Centerstone

Centerstone (www.centerstone.org), a not-for-profit organization is the nation's largest provider of community-based behavioral healthcare. With a history that spans over fifty years, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to more than 69,000 individuals of all ages and their families annually. Children, adolescents, adults, seniors, and families all receive help from a multitude of different programs in more than 120 facilities and 150 partnership locations in Tennessee and Indiana. Centerstone is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in Tennessee and The Joint Commission in Indiana. For more information about Centerstone, please call toll free at (888) 291-4357.

About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone's wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone's Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, "Homicide Response." Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.