

- 1) Mental Wellness
- 2) Work
- 3) Health
- 4) Finances

BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. DECEMBER NEWSLETTER



Have a Stress-Free Holiday

Although the holidays should be a time of joy and festivity, it can also be a time of great stress and anxiety. National Stress-Free Family Holidays Month brings awareness to the heightened anxiety that comes between Thanksgiving and Christmas. It is noted to be one of the most stressful times of the year. Between traveling, holiday parties, cooking, shopping and financial stress, the holidays can quickly become overwhelming. December has been named National Stress-Free Family Holidays Month (NSFFHM) to increase awareness of the problems that stress can cause during the holiday season.

This stress can often motivate people to find quick fixes to eliminate or lower stress levels. Quick fixes like smoking, alcohol use or other substances, eating foods high in sugar without continuing exercise programs, shopping or even gambling to come up with extra cash simply presents a no-win situation. These all promise a short-term benefit, but fail to inform you of the long-term consequences lurking in the distance with continued use. To combat anxiety and stress during this time, consider the following:

- ▶ **Organize and simplify.** Consider paper and plastic utensils to cut down on clean up. Instead of creating a meal that looks more like you are trying to feed a small army, plan the meal including only those things that you can reasonably prepare in the time allotted.
- ▶ **Avoid trying to create the “perfect” holiday.** This doesn't exist and will often lead to disappointment and frustration.
- ▶ **Take time to be in the moment.** Planning is essential, but don't forget to be present with your family to actually enjoy the moment and be a part of making lasting memories.
- ▶ **Acknowledge your feelings.** As holidays pass, family units change. Some family members are no longer here with us and this can be difficult. Allow for your feelings and feel free to express them so you can move on.
- ▶ **Ask for help.** It's okay if you can't do it all. Be honest with yourself and allow for collaboration and delegation. Most importantly, give yourself permission to say no. If you don't set boundaries, others won't either.
- ▶ **Get rest and exercise.** As much as possible, don't neglect resting and proper exercise. Your body likes routine so try to plan ahead and allot proper time for these essentials.
- ▶ **Remember the reason for the season.** Set aside time and make it a priority to actually celebrate the meaning of the holidays. Allow time to reflect over the year passed and anticipate special moments in the upcoming year.

www.worksmartlivesmart.com

If you need assistance handling stress, call your BHS Care Coordinator at 800-245-1150 to discuss your benefits.



Encourage Acceptance In the Workplace

Workplace environments are made up of individuals with varying personality types and religious beliefs. This is sometimes never more apparent than during the holiday season. Often, individual beliefs may complement one another, but from time to time, there may be a need to promote teamwork and group cohesion by encouraging employees to accept one another for their differences. Encouraging acceptance of other people and their beliefs, however, is a more complex task than simply saying this is what should be done. Employers have to lead by example and educate staff on why this is important.

- ▶ Hold sensitivity training sessions for staff. This is particularly poignant if you have a diverse staff - or are in the process of building one - and want to ensure that everyone's diverse beliefs and cultures are not only accepted overall, but understood enough to ensure that no one on your staff thinks it's acceptable to be culturally divisive or offensive. Allow employees to give feedback on how well they feel they are accepted and give input on what you - as an employer - can do differently to encourage acceptance of various differences.
- ▶ Place employees in teams to approach various project assignments. When employees learn to work together in a team environment, they may be

able to better overcome their differences and accept one another professionally as well as personally. Educate management staff on how to facilitate conflict resolution for teams should the need arise, with a focus on accepting each other's differences and appreciating them instead of allowing them to cause conflict.

- ▶ Plan retreats for staff to allow them a relaxed environment to get to know one another better. This can be hard to do in a strict and staid work environment. When employees get out of the office and interact with one another, it gives them a chance to chat and network on a more personal level. A more personal understanding of each employee's personality may give way to better working relationships upon return to the office.
- ▶ Distribute literature to your staff touting your commitment to diversity. This makes it a matter of policy, rather than just something you encourage among staff. Use the literature to detail ways to get along despite differences, or try conflict resolution when working styles are the issue. Learning from one another's cultural differences also maintains a professional and positive atmosphere.

Lynda Moultry Belcher | www.smallbusiness.chron.com



Healthy Holiday Eating

It's that time of year again. Holiday parties and family gatherings often present a special challenge when it comes to eating healthy—especially for people trying to lose or maintain weight or trying to prevent or control diabetes. The key to a healthy gathering is a variety of healthy food selections, and this doesn't mean completely sacrificing all of your favorites!

Following are a few suggestions to help you stay healthy and enjoy the holidays:

- ▶ **Eat a healthy snack before leaving home.** This will reduce the risk of overeating at the party.
- ▶ **Go to the party with a plan.** Check out the buffet first, and then decide what and how much you will eat. The foods you select should fit into your meal plan.
- ▶ **Bring a dish.** Contribute your favorite healthy dish to the holiday buffet.
- ▶ **Savor every bite.** Eating slowly reduces your chances of eating too much.
- ▶ **Drink water.** Water is a healthy, no-calorie beverage (compared to 1 cup of eggnog that has 342 calories).
- ▶ **Trim the fat from the meat.** Each tablespoon of fat you trim off contains 100 calories.
- ▶ **Be the life of the party.** Stay active by focusing on party activities instead of the buffet table.

If you're throwing the party, here are a few additional ways to be a healthy holiday host:

- ▶ **Offer a variety of low-fat, high-fiber foods.** There are lots of healthier options; consider fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, lean meats and whole-grains.
- ▶ **Serve healthy alternatives to traditional holiday dishes.** Transform traditionally high-fat, high-calorie foods into low-fat, healthier versions.
- ▶ **Be a support system for your family members and friends.** If you see them slipping, encourage them to eat healthy during the holiday season and throughout the year.

POLITICS AT THE TABLE

My in-laws voted for [insert candidate]. I didn't. They are coming to visit us. How will I bear their presence? Their candidate symbolizes everything I fear for in this country. I want to stop blaming them and feeling so angry, but I don't know how. What do I do?

A wise (and very fit) man—my trainer Ed Cashin—posted a sign on his gym door: “No politics, please. Only kettlebells.” There will be time and great need for important conversations in the coming months. But if you are feeling raw right now, as many of us are, postpone talking politics until you can do so calmly and respectfully. Try to focus on shared interests instead: family news, hobbies, movies and TV shows you've enjoyed. If all else fails, settle for minutiae: “How, exactly, do you make that chestnut stuffing, Jack?” And don't be shy to say: “I'm feeling bruised by the election. Let's wait to have that discussion.” We'll get through it. People of good faith always do.

The New York Times

Holiday Saving Tips

December is an exciting month, but many of us are short on time and money. If you're trying to spend less this season, follow our holiday shopping tips for this festive time of year.

Leave the credit card at home and bring cash or your debit card instead.

Credit card debt can be very expensive if you can't repay it in full immediately or within a few months. When you are spending the cash in your pocket or in your bank account, you are less likely to overspend than if you pay with a credit card.

List everyone that you intend to buy for, then budget a reasonable amount that you can afford to spend on each person. Making a shopping list will also help you avoid impulse buying and help keep track of your spending.

Avoid shopping at the last minute. Leaving yourself plenty of time and avoiding busy shopping hours will make your Christmas shopping easier.

Try a new approach to buying presents. Agree on a spending limit with friends and family or try Secret Santa, so each person only has to buy one present. Consider splitting costs with friends or relatives for expensive items.

Your BHS EAP benefit can assist with financial advice, including how to create a budget. Contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800-245-1150 to discuss your available benefits.



Blueberry-Ricotta Pancakes

Prep Time: 40 mins

Ready in: 40 mins

Serving Size: 2 servings

Ingredients:

- ▶ 1/2 cup whole-wheat pastry flour
- ▶ 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ▶ 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ▶ 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- ▶ 1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- ▶ 3/4 cup part-skim ricotta cheese
- ▶ 1 large egg
- ▶ 1 large egg white
- ▶ 1/2 cup notfat buttermilk
- ▶ 1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest
- ▶ 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ▶ 2 teaspoons canola oil, divided
- ▶ 3/4 cup fresh or frozen (not thawed) blueberries



Nutrition:

237 calories; 8 g fat; 3 g fiber; 30 g carbs;
12 g protein; 61 mg cholesterol; 6 g sugars

Instructions:

- ▶ Whisk whole-wheat flour, all-purpose flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and nutmeg in a small bowl. Whisk ricotta, egg, egg white, buttermilk, lemon zest and juice in a large bowl until smooth. Stir the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients until combined.
- ▶ Brush a large nonstick skillet with 1/2 teaspoon oil and place over medium heat until hot. Using a generous 1/4 cup of batter for each pancake, pour the batter for 2 pancakes into the pan. Sprinkle blueberries on each pancake and cook until the edges are dry and bubbles begin to form, about 2 minutes. Flip the pancakes and cook until golden brown, about 2 minutes more. Repeat with the remaining oil, batter and berries, adjusting the heat as necessary to prevent burning.