



Holiday Happenings

by Jon Murphy, M. Div.

*first published in *REAP the benefits* September 2004
Raleigh Employee Assistance Program, Inc.

Once again, the holiday season is rapidly approaching. Soon, we may find ourselves in the midst of family gatherings, reminiscing and enjoying holidays with loved ones, close companions, and/or coworkers.

Unfortunately, **the holidays can be one of the most stressful periods of the year.** We may face family upheavals, losses, unreasonable expectations, or pressure for excessive spending. So, how do we plan ahead to reduce holiday stress?

Listed below are some tips for employing organization and adaptation skills, which can contribute to a more enjoyable season:

1. **Identify priorities** for holiday events, e.g., family, spiritual, socializing with friends, rest, health, etc.
2. Be careful not to over-extend yourself.
Don't commit to an activity unless you have the time and energy.



3. If you plan to purchase gifts early, host parties, call and/or send cards to friends, then **list when each event should be started and completed on your calendar.**

4. **Maintain a list of successful activities and events from past holidays.**
5. Create a "**not-to-do list**" or "**irrational list**" for the holidays.
Note things you have felt pressured to complete and failed to accomplish.
Remove them from your "to do" list.



6. **Make sure your spending is rational and realistic**, and that your budget is not exceeded. Review and pre-plan giving habits. However, insure that no one is forgotten for the holidays.
7. Avoid unrealistic expectations for a "perfect" holiday. Life is complex and things go wrong. Therefore, set a realistic goal of enjoying the season and sharing with friends and loved ones!



8. Contact REAP for a free phone consultation or visit for ideas to help reduce your holiday stresses.