TIP SHEET: DEALING WITH HOLIDAY STRESS

It is getting to be that time of year when we all start to feel the stress and pressure of the holidays. While it can be a fun and happy time for us, the holidays can bring a lot of stress that can leave most of us feeling overwhelmed and exhausted.

TIPS TO REDUCE HOLIDAY STRESS

- Recognize when you are getting stressed. When the holidays come around, it's easy to get so busy that we forget to pay attention to the warning signs that we are getting stressed. Some signs of stress can include problems sleeping, being more irritable, feeling depressed, or having body aches.

- Know your limitations. It is easy to feel over-extended during the holidays and feel like you have no time to get things done. We sometimes take on too many responsibilities and obligations that we find ourselves getting overwhelmed and exhausted. When you start getting to your capacity, it is okay to tell people, "No." Prioritize what is important to you and give yourself permission to let some things go.

- Know your financial limitations. Set a budget of what you are willing to spend this holiday season. A lot of the stress we experience comes from the money we spend wanting to get the perfect gift for that special someone or for our children. It is okay to let our children know that some things are too expensive, and that even Santa Claus has a budget. You can get someone a meaningful and personal gift without having to spend a fortune.

- Be realistic with your goals. During the holidays, we tend to put so many expectations on ourselves and others that we get stressed trying to figure out how we are going to accomplish everything. Take a step back and reassess your goals. Ask yourself if your goals are realistic. Can you accomplish everything you want? Is the goal set too high that achieving it is impossible? Am I giving myself enough time to get what I want done? Keep these questions in mind when setting your goals.

- Take time for yourself. During the holidays, we get so caught up in giving that we tend to forget about what we need. There is no written rule that says that we have to be there for everyone all the time. It is important that we take a break once in a while to give ourselves a chance to rest and recharge our batteries. It is important that we make sure we keep doing those little things that keep us healthy, like sleeping and eating healthy.

- Avoid excessive alcohol or other drug use. It is easy during the holidays to get caught up in the festivities and holiday parties, especially when we feel stress. However, all it does is create more problems that can be easily avoided.

The holiday season can be an enjoyable time for everybody and does not need to be stressful. However, if the stress of the holidays does get overwhelming or there are other things that are contributing to your stress, talking to a mental health professional can help you get back on track. You can always contact your EAP/MAP for assistance.