



## Happy Holidays – Maximizing our Enjoyment of the Holiday Season

We are in the midst of the Holidays. What a joyful, exciting time.... Planning, shopping, wrapping gifts, preparing menus, entertaining, attending parties, eating too much, drinking too much, etc. What an exhausting time....

We all know that the Holidays can be the most wonderful or the most awful part of the year (or a little of both). So, as we are in the midst of the chaos, take a moment to step back. Take a deep breath.....Take stock.....Ensure that you are:

- Taking steps to minimize stress;
- caring for you physical, spiritual and emotional needs.

### Steps to Minimize Stress and caring for your emotional needs

Recognize that the increased socializing and contact with friends and family can reignite unresolved emotional conflicts, causing sadness, depression, anxiety, etc. Recognition is often half the problem.

- If you have lost a loved one recently, remember that the first holidays without the loved one are the most difficult. Acknowledge and accept your emotions, knowing that they are normal and the difficulty will lessen with time. Plan to spend time with people who provide comfort.
- Perhaps you fear reigniting family conflicts? Take the time to reflect on the types of problems that have occurred in the past. Think about what needs to happen in order to avoid recreating previous destructive conflicts. What are your expectations? Are they realistic? Is it acceptable for family members to have strong differences in opinion? If not, why? Can you call family members in advance and say: “I want us to have a beautiful holiday this year. I know we have our differences, so let us agree to avoid certain hot topics” (or some other ideas you may have.)
- Maintain a sense of humor and mutual respect for those with whom you interact.

**Gift Giving:** If this is a source of stress, examine why. Are you short of funds? How about making things, or creating lovely redeemable coupons:

- i. For the exhausted parents of young children: a coupon for babysitting or prepare an audio book, with you recording a favorite story.

- ii. For young children: coupons for special events like a picnic, hike, a ride on a train, a day at the zoo, etc.
- iii. Prepare a photo album for loved ones.
- iv. For an older loved one: schedule a day for doing whatever chores or activities this person requests.

### **Caring for your physical and spiritual needs**

- Be sure to continue exercising, meditating, eating healthily and obtaining proper rest.
- Spiritually, what needs do you have? Do the holidays create for greater spiritual growth or not?

What might accomplish that for you? Possibilities to entertain:

1. Perhaps attending a House of Worship? Trying a new one?
2. Volunteering your time to a worthy cause?
3. Seeking a conversation with a spiritual leader?

In conclusion, step back, assess and plan for the holidays by reflecting on disappointments from previous holidays. Then, brainstorm on how you can avoid similar problems in the present. Finally, if you continue to run into problems, consider seeking professional assistance in the New Year, so that you will grow and learn from the experience.

We wish you very Happy Holidays.

Drs. Tamara and Mark Sofair-Fisch are psychologists with practices in West Orange, New Jersey and Lawrenceville, New Jersey. They specialize in relationship problems, parenting issues, spiritual growth, anxiety, depression, life transitions, stress management and provide individual, family, marital/couples and group psychotherapy for these and many other issues. For more information, please visit their psychology practice in Essex County, NJ and Mercer County, NJ at [www.RelationshipSolutionsNJ.com](http://www.RelationshipSolutionsNJ.com).

Call us today to schedule a consultation.

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