

# The Whole Employee Series

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## It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year..

Many things at all times of the year can contribute to feeling stressed however, during the holidays many of these factors collide together all at once. Financial worry about buying the biggest and best things to prove that Santa really does love your Timmy best. Relationship do's, don'ts and oopsies. (Did you really buy her an iron?) Workplace expectations, deadlines and the highly anticipated Christmas Party. Throw in some glitter stuck to everything and the never ending strum of Christmas carols and the holiday season can be a time that even the seemingly most balanced person is looking to go to sleep until the new year. In this issue we will look at how to meet the extra challenges of the holiday season while ensuring that you stay healthy physically and mentally and are able to enjoy the festivities.

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### The Whole Employee Series

A complete series of workplace sessions designed to increase a companies' bottom-line with balanced employee health.

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## Santa's Christmas Money Tips

We asked Santa how he balances his budget each year for all the children in the land and these were his best holiday financial tips:

1. Sit down with the whole family and first outline what is the family holiday goal this year. (ie, Enjoy a loving, meaningful week with my family).
2. List all the priorities to meet that goal (ie. Take the kids tobogganing), assign a dollar value to each item.
3. Set a holiday budget. Be realistic with it. Include cards, decorations, gifts, food, entertaining, travel expenses and your priorities from above.
4. Stick to your holiday budget. Have a plan on where you are going to make up the shortfall if you do go over. (ie. Not eating out)
5. Make lists for gift shopping with amounts to be spent...this will help you to keep your eye on your budget.
6. Don't fall for the credit companies methods to have you overspend. They often raise credit limits at this time of year and you may not realize until you get a whopping bill in Jan.
7. Get creative. Opt for small thoughtful gifts or experience gifts. They will mean more to both the giver and receiver.
8. Trim your children's expectations. Have them only place 2 or 3 things they really want on their wish lists.
9. Don't be afraid to ask for help if needed. Be honest with your family and friends and gratefully accept what is offered. Most communities have programs for food and/or gifts that can help you through the holidays. You can give back another time when you are able.
10. Plan ahead for next year. Set aside money each month so that you are less stressed next year.



## Holiday Stress Signs

Does the thought of having to join the crowds at the malls leave you in cold sweats or attending another Christmas concert find you whining and complaining? Do you reach for another glass of spiked eggnog to forget that you have to travel to three different houses over 300km apart on your four-day holiday break? Not to state the obvious but you may be experiencing holiday stress.

Stress affects all areas of our bodies, brains and emotions. It can have influence over our thought patterns, feelings and behaviors. Here are some of the common signs and symptoms that people experience when struggling with too much stress.

1. Changes in your appetite or weight.
2. Changes in your sleep patterns.
3. Being irritable, moody or over sensitive about things.
4. Outbursts of crying or yelling.
5. Unexplained headaches, pounding of the heart, stomach problems or breathing changes.
6. Lack of interest in things you used to enjoy
7. Increase usage of alcohol and/or drugs.
8. Feelings of panic, guilt and low self-esteem.
9. Lack of sexual desire or ability.
10. Inability to quiet your mind or relax.

## Rudolph's Tips for Playing Nice with Others

1. Take care of yourself first. Make yourself a priority. Take a breather to have a bath, read a book, exercise or meditate. This will give you more energy and focus for the loved ones in your life.
2. It's not all about money. It's the simple things that matter. Time, kindness, respect and understanding. Focus your energies on these and you will be rewarded with Holiday Spirit.
3. Appreciate the traditions of all family members, cherish their meanings and find a way to make memories and traditions of your own.
4. When problems, arguments and disagreements arise talk about them openly. Discuss what the issues are and agree to solve them together. Blaming, pouting and ignoring the problem will only feed it and allow it to grow.
5. Be realistic with your expectations. Family dynamics can be complicated and often don't go smoothly. Don't expect anyone to be different. Most likely they are the same as the last time you saw them.
6. Do not do anything out of guilt. It will only cause resentment and in the end no one will be happy.
7. Be flexible. The picture you have in your mind may not be what happens, however, reality could be better. Don't worry about what could have been.



## Ensuring Peace, Love and Cookies in the Workshop

As the year draws to a close we feel the stress of personal obligations combined with professional responsibilities. Winter itself can cause us to be exhausted and blue and the impending holidays with end of the year demands can lead to us feeling overwhelmed at work. In a poll of 600 full-time employees, 66% of the respondents reported that they experienced extra stress at work during the holidays. Managing holiday stress at work is an important piece to the overall health and wellness of a person.

1. Acknowledge your own feelings but try not to take things personally. You can't know what's going on in the minds of our colleagues and we don't know their pain. Focus on your work, and your own feelings and solutions.
2. Take time to exercise. Choose a level and intensity that is comfortable and build it into your everyday routine. This will allow you to be able to focus better while at work.
3. Prioritize what is important to do now and what can wait. If it can wait make a concrete plan on when and how you will complete the task within a reasonable amount of time.
4. Ensure that your nutritional needs are being met. Take time to eat healthy so that your body can fuel itself for such a busy time. Enjoy the treats but don't stuff yourself to the point of guilt.
5. Take time to breathe and recharge your battery. Focus on yourself and you will find that you will have the energy for others.

6. Remain positive. Instead of focusing on what is not going right, or how much is left to do, or what we can't do look for the positives. Celebrate the successes.
7. Get enough sleep. Everything is easier with sleep.
8. Enjoy the office festivities but don't overindulge (even if all the cool kids are). You may find that the negative consequences are long lasting. You still need to work with your colleagues and face your boss, don't lose their respect.
9. Always respond with kindness and consideration and be prepared to give them freely. Offer people the benefit of the doubt especially during the holidays.



## 10 Things Employees Wished Their Employers Would Do At Christmas

1. Be flexible to accommodate added burdens.
2. Provide a shopping day.
3. Allow employees to take care of personal business at work.
4. Ease up on the dress code.
5. Add a little cheer in the form of decorations.
6. Pay attention and recognize the signs of heightened stress levels.
7. Maintain good and effective communication so everyone is kept in the loop.
8. Recognize and be mindful that the holidays are not the same for everyone.
9. Keep office celebrations simple.
10. Let your team know and feel that they are appreciated.



## Getting Help Over the Holidays

Many charitable organizations are available to help during the holiday season. Most communities have a food bank or a hamper program to assist with groceries and all the fixings for Christmas dinner. Check with the local FCSS for a contact. For an actual Christmas dinner local soup kitchens and Salvation Army often have many options. For a bit of Santa help to ensure the kids and other family members have something to unwrap Christmas morning look for local Christmas Bureaus, Santa's Anonymous or Adopt-a-Family programs. Most have an application process and ensure you apply early so you don't get missed. Local churches and service groups are also a good place to contact as they often have programs or parishioners looking to help. Taking the time to research your options on the internet and social media of what is in your area can be invaluable and surprising as to how much is actually available.

Remember: there is no shame in admitting you need and asking for help. We all need a hand up at some points in our lives and this is just your moment. Be gracious in your acceptance and allow others to take some of the holiday pressure off. You can always pay it forward and help someone else another year when you are seeing better times. Ultimately enjoy what you are being blessed with and make memories with your loved ones. Happy Holidays!