

## The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

### **Don't Let The Holidays Get You Down**

from the American Counseling Association

While the holiday weeks from Thanksgiving thru New Years are a period of enthusiasm and joy most of the time, it can also be a period when it's easy to become frustrated, stressed, over-tired and depressed.

Thanks to all the media focus on the holidays, we often create expectations and obligations for ourselves that simply aren't realistic. So this year, why not do a little planning to help reduce holiday stress and make the season more enjoyable?

Start by being realistic. While it's easy to envy the beautifully decorated homes, homemade gifts and gourmet holiday meals you see on TV and in magazines, you're only going to frustrate yourself trying to replicate the work of paid specialists. Instead, focus on a few holiday preparations that you truly enjoy. If baking cookies with the kids is fun, do it. If hanging big strings of outdoor lights is frustrating and exhausting, skip it.

It also helps to keep gifts and gift giving under control. Advertisers and retailers would like you to believe that your holidays can't be happy without all those Black Friday and Cyber Monday specials. But instead of going for quantity and expense, choose gifts with special meaning for the recipient. When a gift is personal and appropriate, it's appreciated because it shows you were thoughtful and that you really care.

Another way to avoid holiday anxiety, especially the type that often comes with that January credit card bill, is to set holiday budgets. Have a family discussion, with the kids included, on spending limits. Consider paying in cash to help avoid starting the year with those credit card blues.

A good way of limiting holiday frustration is to focus on the real meaning of the holidays. For many people, they have a religious or spiritual purpose, but it can also be a time for showing appreciation for family and friends. Many families, including the children, find satisfaction and joy during the holiday period by sharing with those less fortunate. Whatever your personal interpretation of the season, emphasize it in your family.

The key to happier holidays is taking control of the season and personally shaping it to make an enjoyable time for you and your family. Simplify things to help minimize the stress and frustration the season can bring, and instead focus on creating memories you can enjoy and cherish.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcornet@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcornet@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).*

###

words: 391