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Helping Organizations Retain Their Most Valuable Asset

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Colds and Flu Prevention

A proactive approach to warding off colds and flu is apt to make your whole life healthier. The most effective way to prevent the flu is to get the flu shot. There are other strategies you can employ as well.

- Wash Your Hands. Most cold and flu viruses are spread by direct contact. The germs can live for hours only to be picked up by the next person who touches the same object.
- Drink Plenty of Fluids. Water flushes your system, washing out the poisons as it rehydrates you.
- Get Fresh Air. A regular dose of fresh air is important, especially in cold weather when central heating dries you out and makes your body more vulnerable to cold and flu viruses.
- Don't Smoke. Statistics show that heavy smokers get more severe and frequent colds. Even being around smoke profoundly zaps the immune system.
- Cut Alcohol Consumption. Heavy alcohol use destroys the liver, the body's primary filtering system, which means that germs of all kinds won't leave your body as fast.
- Relax. If you can teach yourself to relax, you can activate your immune system on demand. Train yourself to picture an image you find pleasant or calming.



Source: Web MD Inc.

5 Ways

To Improve Family Get-Togethers



On television, the advertisements for Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa look like festive times of joy and closeness. But a recent poll of over 1400 individuals shows that for over 68% of us, there are unresolved tensions with specific family members that cause frustrating moments year after year.

For example, in your own extended family:

- Is there at least one relative you dread sitting near or getting judged by at family gatherings?
- Has there been a tendency at family events for certain people to drink or eat excessively and it brings out their worst traits?
- Do you ever feel like an outsider when you're at your in-laws for a family event?
- Do you sometimes feel frustrated because no matter how mature and successful you've become in other areas of your life, you still get treated in a demeaning way by a particular parent, sibling, or other relative?

Based on the book WHEN DIFFICULT RELATIVES HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE: SURVIVING YOUR FAMILY AND KEEPING YOUR SANITY, here are five realistic things you can do pro-actively to improve your next family get-togethers:

1. Bring your sense of humorous perspective to every family visit or phone call. Instead of being a victim, you can regain your sense of strength and clarity by saying silently to yourself in the middle of a tense family conversation,

"Thank goodness for my family. If it weren't for their obnoxious behaviors, how else could I learn who I don't want to be?" Or you can say to yourself, "This is the ultimate workout. If I can remember to breathe, stay calm, and set firm but compassionate limits with these folks, I'll be able to handle any tough situation in the other areas of my life."

2. Lobby ahead of time to create alliances and positive changes in the way your family gets together. Instead of having a 6-hour gathering where people consume too much alcohol before the food finally gets served, what if you lobbied with several of your relatives to make this year's gathering a 3-hour event with strict limits on booze and a much earlier meal. Call on the phone or have a face-to-face meeting with the saner and more compassionate members of your family weeks or months ahead of the next big get-together. Brainstorm with this person what can be done to make the next holiday visit more comfortable for yourselves and for anyone who has felt mistreated at prior events. If you develop enough allies and support ahead of time, you might be able to stand up to a stubborn or abusive relative much better this year. Instead of feeling trapped or powerless, there can be three or four of you that say to this over-the-top relative, "Hey, let's treat each other better this year. We know you can do it."

3. Set a tongue-in-cheek budget for how many stressful moments or obnoxious comments still can be considered a "successful event." Instead of feeling defeated or devastated if a particular relative says one insensitive or hurtful remark, you can utilize your sense of irony to set

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a budget that says, "This year I'm going to stay calm even if this person says or does 5 obnoxious things. That's my budget – the first 5 idiotic comments don't count and the event can still be considered to be a success." Then if you hear this person say 2 or 3 strange comments, you can smile to yourself and say, "Wow, this has been a great success. We're still well under budget and it's much less crazy than in previous years."

4. Focus your attention instead on a few specific realizable positive goals for what will make the family gathering worthwhile for you. You might need to tell yourself ahead of time the one or two bottom-line reasons why you're making this investment of time and money to hang out with your relatives. It might be to spend 10-30 quality minutes with an aging relative that you love and who isn't going to be here forever. It might be to spend a few precious moments with a young child (a niece, nephew, cousin, or other distant relative) who is precious and you don't get to see this amazing soul too often. It could be to give your own kids a chance to get to

know their cousins better. Or it might be that the reason for the family gathering is simply for you to learn a little more about the history, quirks, eccentricities, and complex personalities of your extended family because it will help you understand your own life better (and let you appreciate how far you've come from the situation you grew up with). Even in a crazy family where lots of stressful moments happen, you can still feel successful because you are achieving these important positive goals during your visit.

5. Plan with your spouse or partner how to stay united as a team and not get split apart by any family strangeness. This pre-planning on how to be "a united couple" is crucial because quite often people start taking out on their current loved one the frustrations they are feeling from being around a difficult extended family. You may need to set some ground rules ahead of time, such as, "I'm allowed to criticize my own relatives and your job is to listen calmly. But please don't start criticizing my relatives, because like most people I'm probably going to get a bit defensive if you do that." Or you can check in with each other every few minutes at the holiday gathering and say (verbally or nonverbally), "We're in this together. I'm on your side. We're visiting this complicated family situation as teammates and we're not going to let any of them split us apart." Remember the goal at a family gathering is not perfection, but simply to enjoy a few quality moments and shared memories with people that you don't get to see very often.

Managing Stress At Work

59 Percent Say Work Is Leading Cause Of Stress

According to a national survey conducted by the American Psychological Association, 59 percent of adults in the U.S. report that work is their leading cause of stress. Unfortunately, many people engage in unhealthy behaviors such as comfort eating, poor diet choices, smoking and inactivity to help deal with stress. These responses to stress can actually lead to health problems that result in increased stress.

Studies show that 43% of all adults suffer adverse health effects from stress. What steps can you take to increase your ability to healthfully manage stress at work?

Tips for managing job stress

There are many things you can do to lessen the effects of stress at work. Follow the suggestions below:

- When circumstances at work make you angry or tense, take some steps toward resolving the problem. This gets you away from a sense of feeling "trapped," which is very stress producing.
- Talk out your problems with a sympathetic and trustworthy friend. Often another person can help you see your problem in a new light, so you can work on a constructive solution.
- Build an effective and supportive relationship with your supervisor.
- Take your breaks and enjoy them. Walk outside, read something non-work related, or rest and put your feet up.
- Start your day with a nutritional breakfast. Avoid coffee or tea with caffeine. Caffeine increases the stress response of your body.
- Try deep breathing. Find a quiet place and seat yourself comfortably. Close your eyes and breathe in slowly. Let the breath out for a count of 5-10 seconds. Practice this routine any time you feel tense.

HMS Is Here To Help

If you need help with issues related to stress or your job, contact Human Management Services (HMS) for confidential counseling, referrals or information. Remember, HMS is always available to help you or your immediate family members with any type of personal, family or work-related concern. We're here to help.

Recommended Reading

WHEN DIFFICULT RELATIVES HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE: SURVIVING YOUR FAMILY AND KEEPING YOUR SANITY, by Leonard Felder, Ph.D., includes research on stressful family gatherings and practical tools and strategies for improving these events. For more information, log on to .

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