

Managing Stress During the Holiday Season

It's 1:00 a.m. and you just can't seem to fall asleep. Your head is spinning with a never-ending "to do" list: finish shopping, decorate the house, bake cookies for the company potluck. With so much going on during the holiday season, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Many of us take on too much and have a tough time balancing our schedules. As a result, we feel stressed out during what is supposed to be the most festive time of year. Following are some practical and effective tips for managing stress during the holidays:

- **Prioritize Your Time.** Make two lists of everything you want to accomplish, from chores to leisure time. Put the less pleasant activities that you must do on one list and more enjoyable activities on the other. Then combine the two lists, interchanging "must do's" with "want to do's." This way, you can be productive and still have a good time.
- **Avoid Procrastinating.** While some tasks seem overwhelming, putting them off until the last minute will just cause more stress. Try breaking big projects into little tasks, and they will feel more manageable. Incorporate these smaller tasks as separate items on your "to do" lists. You'll tend to accomplish more if you feel as though you're being productive.
- **Ask For Help.** There's nothing wrong with asking for help for those activities that seem unmanageable. Or, try to work with others to accomplish your tasks. Helping one another can help you cut down on the amount of work you must do.
- **Take Advantage of "Down Time."** Plan your shopping trips during times when the stores are the least crowded. If you stop by the mall in the early evening during the week, their down time, you will probably get more accomplished than by going on a Saturday afternoon.
- **Laugh Away Tension.** A good laugh gives your body, heart, lungs, and stomach a healthy workout. It also lowers blood pressure, heart rate, and muscle tension, and can relieve stress just as well as taking a nap does. Try to look for the humor in stressful situations – tell a joke, find reasons to laugh – and you'll start to feel better.
- **Set Limits.** Be realistic about what you can do, and schedule time for breaks. It's important to make time for yourself. Don't feel obligated to accept every party invitation; be choosy! Spend time with people whose company you enjoy. Make sure your expectations for the holiday season are realistic and practical.

Resources Are Available

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at www.MagellanHealth.com. Or call us for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.