

Scott Donkin, DC, DACBOH is an internationally published author, chiropractor, speaker and consultant who has been in private practice in Lincoln, Nebraska for thirty years. Dr. Donkin speaks, produces and consults extensively on the subjects of human performance, ergonomics, workplace safety, health, wellness and longevity. You can contact Dr. Donkin by email at sdonkin@donkinchiropractic.com or by telephone at (402) 488-1500 for patient consultation, speaking engagements or consulting questions.

CORPORATE CLINIC: STRESSBUSTERS II

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The next two months you can look forward to:

January '90 STRESSBUSTERS III: *Relaxation Techniques I*

February '90 STRESSBUSTERS IV: *Relaxation Techniques II*

HOLIDAY STRESS...THE UNFORTUNATE PARADOX

It is unfortunate that the joy and wonder of the holiday season is frequently overshadowed by anxiety and the physical and emotional effects of negative stress. As we investigate stress in this series, you will learn that the paradoxical nature of the holidays, as we currently celebrate them, is predictable. This being the case, the best gift we can offer is the information you need to prepare yourself and your family for true enjoyment and fulfillment this holiday season.

Since stress is your body's emotional, mental and physical reaction to change, the greatest opportunity for work and lifestyle change occurs during the holidays. Virtually every aspect of your life is affected, and while some aspects are affected more than others, their cumulative effect can sabotage the memories you are creating.

FAMILY

While family interaction is expected during the holidays, don't deny it as a leading source of stress. You will probably be sharing your time with more people than you are accustomed to; therefore, many conversations will occur simultaneously. Scheduling and organizing family events can be extremely difficult with so many additional opinions. It is noble to strive for perfection with family-but realize- we are all human, and none of us are perfect. Leave room in your expectations for spontaneity and compromise.

FOOD

Special cookies, cakes, candies and other treats are anticipated, but remember that your blood sugar levels fluctuate drastically with the rapid influx of these foods to your diet. Corresponding mood swings are a natural consequence of indulgence, so be sure to take this into consideration during periods of family interaction. Ingestion of unusually large portions of food during holiday dinners is followed by periods of low energy as your body shifts to digestion rather than physical activity. Your brother-in-law may not be bored with your conversation; he may just be digesting his holiday meal.

FINANCES

The cost of a gift and its corresponding value are not necessarily the same. Cost is determined by the retail outlet or catalog from which you purchased the item. Value is determined by the recipient of the gift. Both are necessary considerations in shopping for the people you care about. It would be prudent to say that you should set a budget for gifts and stick to it, but being realistic, the typical consumer's budget is usually blown half way through gift buying. One common reason for this is because it is difficult to strictly

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allocate money for gifts which will be received by family. This is where value emerges. Adding your personal touch to a gift, such as a special and sincere note/letter-or purchasing a gift which truly reflects the recipient's thoughts, feelings and/or actions throughout the past year will inevitably boost the value of your gift.

ROUTINE/WORK

Holiday seasons inevitably disrupt normal work patterns. Vacation days frequently require increased productivity immediately before and/or immediately after the holidays. Advanced knowledge of your responsibilities and obligations will enable you to formulate a plan to use your time more efficiently. You must be particularly focused on your tasks during these peak performance periods. It is generally wise to adjust your schedule to allow sufficient time to accomplish your tasks. Effective organization of your schedule now will enable you to enjoy your time away from work. Your goal is to plan ahead so your holiday time can be focused on family and fun.

Family holiday preparation and recreational activities often deviate from your usual physical regimen. Performing unaccustomed physical activities is a common cause of injury. Prepare your body for physical activity such as carrying the Christmas tree, extensive house/yard cleaning or family recreation by properly stretching prior to exertion. Refrain from unaccustomed exertion or begin preparing your body now for these activities. Strain and sprains have spoiled many holidays.

SLEEP

Many people consider sleep to be a necessary evil during the holidays. Nevertheless, it remains essential. Quality sleep enables your body to relax, repair and rejuvenate for the next day's events. Whether you're hosting or traveling, sleep patterns are invariably disrupted. Caffeine, sugar and alcohol alter sleep cycles. To insure quality sleep, avoid excessive consumption during your pre-sleep hours or prepare yourself for consequences of fatigue and irritability the following day. Properly filled waterbeds or firm but comfortable conventional mattresses are both important considerations.

HOLIDAY AFTERMATH

Holiday seasons are in many respects similar to walking on the moon. Tremendous preparation, followed by a relatively short sequence of events, creates a sense of loss after conclusion. And then there is the clean up, pack up, pay up – call them the anticlimactic blues. Fortunately, the New Year follows Christmas and Hanukkah, and it becomes a time of restating goals and planning for the 1990's coming attractions. Take some time to relax and cherish this holiday's memories, minimize the losses – and focus on positive future work and family activities. Lack of anticipatory thought after the holidays will create or intensify depression. Prepare now.

To focus your attention on a small number of these holiday stress factors is more the rule than the exception. However, don't forget that all factors are contributing to your cumulative stress level. For example, if you are focused primarily on financial management during the holidays, the effects of altered diet, work routine and sleep may still sneak up on you. So, even though you successfully managed your "priority task", the other subtle stress factors managed to sabotage what could have been a positive holiday experience.

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I would also venture to predict that the greatest opportunity for family conflict would arise when your body represents a combination of decreased sleep, increased sugar or caffeine intake, and a disrupted daily schedules are combined.

Examine each of these stress factors from the viewpoint of each of your family members, including your children. You may discover new insight and causes of past stressful experiences. Undoubtedly, there are supplementary stress factors which can be applied to your particular situation and now that you are focused on these issues you are more likely to be able to identify and positively deal with them.

Happy Less-Stress Holidays!