

Creating Happy Holidays Through Reducing Stress

The Holiday Season can often be a challenging time of year. We can set ourselves up for stress if we put unreasonable demands on ourselves for the 'picture perfect' Christmas, or if we feel compelled to follow family traditions that don't fit with our current lifestyle or economic circumstances.



To reduce stress over the holiday season, it's important to simplify and focus. Maybe it's time to pare down the various demands we place on ourselves, and focus on the essentials.

After identifying the basics for an enjoyable Christmas, it may be helpful to call a family conference. Get everyone involved. Have each person identify how they can contribute, and then delegate.

Get in touch with your values. Ask yourself what makes you happy as an individual or a family. Typically, it's the quality of the time spent alone or with others, rather than the quantity of things bought or consumed.

How do you have fun? What do you do that makes you feel youthful, playful? Identify the ones that don't require a lot of preparation time or money, and let yourself enjoy!

Enjoyable physical activity is a good stress reducer, and a great way to connect and participate with others. Make yourself aware of local recreational opportunities in your community that are affordable and schedule in some time for them.

The Christmas holidays are typically a time when people connect with their extended families. It is common for families to have issues, and unreasonable to expect that

these will get resolved just because people are in the holiday mood. Anticipate that tensions may arise and have a plan for dealing with them.

Recall the spirit of giving. There are many ways to do things for others less fortunate, whether it's a small contribution of time, money or hospitality.

Gratitude is a great stress reducer, and with a little reflection we can all find things for which we are grateful. So... slow down, breathe, and enjoy the holidays.

This article is one of a series by the Strathcona County Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy Committee addressing information

about drug and alcohol issues. Watch for another article in January.

For a complete listing of resources available, pick up the Drug/Alcohol Resource Directory at the Strathcona County Health Centre located at 2 Brower Drive or at Strathcona County Family and Community Services located at 2755 Broadmoor Boulevard (2nd Floor) in Sherwood Park. The directory is also available on line at www.strathcona.ab.ca. Residents with questions about the strategy can call Strathcona County Family and Community Services at 780-464-4044.