



CENTERSTONE

Wellness Program

The Happiest of Holidays! When less is more...

A mile-long gift list, fighting over parking spaces at the stores, a shrinking wallet, stress from having too much to do and not enough time to do it – these are just a few of the holiday challenges that do *not* bring good cheer. If you are ready to make some changes this year, consider these five tips to maximize joy this holiday season with minimal time, money and energy.

Put your dollars on a diet

I would guess even jolly Saint Nicholas will be tightening his belt this year, as visions of soaring debt levels and rising unemployment rates dance in holiday shoppers' heads. Balancing any post-recession family budget requires some serious shopping sacrifices. Whether it involves saying "No" to your kids' wants, not throwing a big celebration for every event or simply clipping more coupons to dine in more; everyone is trying to maintain their lifestyle with less available money. This holiday season is an opportunity to be kind to your pocket book, creating less expensive ways to be even jollier and share more joy.

Develop a doable budget

It is important to acknowledge that Holiday spending from now until New Years entails much more than just buying gifts. Consider all expenses that go into the preparation, planning and even recovery from the various events and gatherings. Don't forget the hostess gifts for parties, the luncheons with girlfriends, the postage for cards and shipping and the bows, boxes and wrapping paper. Should you crave a new dress or sparkly item, factor those ticket items into your doable budget too. And, of course, include those charitable gift opportunities that may come up as a surprise (such as the Salvation Army Angel Tree, or giving organized by your office or church).

Shrink your stuff not your spirit

Here's a challenge: take a stroll through your home and notice all the stuff. Take a peek in the closets, garage and those high kitchen cabinets. I bet you find more unneeded, unused things than not. The "stuff" in our lives can be emotionally and financially draining. Do you really need or want to receive more itchy sweaters or useless appliances? Consider true needs over wants, even while being tempted by "super special" signs at the stores. Let your close friends and family know you are satisfied with minimal gifts, if any this year. Your spirit (and wallet) will rejoice in not having more collected clutter lying around and not contributing to others' clutter either.

Share your presence over presents

You can still give generously at Christmas, but in a struggling economy spending lots of money is not wise. The greatest gift you can give is yourself. Be fully present and attentive when spending time with friends and loved ones. Listening is a gift more valuable than something in a box. Savor each relationship and each moment. Make the most of time spent together by giving yourself rather than giving presents. Engage in conversation to learn more about each other and from each other. Ask elder family members about past holidays that most captured the joy of the season for them. Let others know about your blessings and your goals.

Give for a greater good

Does your father-in-law really need another tie? Will the pajamas you picked for grandma really warm her heart? You can still give a unique and personal gift to loved ones while also giving for a greater good. You can acknowledge a cause they are passionate about by making a donation to a charity, non-profit or other cause that he or she supports. Making online donations not only saves time and energy from shopping for gifts-by-guess, but also lets your loved one know you support what is important to them. How about a contribution to a children's hospital, an animal shelter, a disease research group or a suffering farmland or country? Your friend or family member will feel honored and celebrated that you thought of their values and passions and made a difference for others with a greater need.

You can do more of what is truly important with less time, energy and money spent! Celebrate this special season with gifts of love, listening and giving to others – the only cost is the reward you will receive.

Centerstone (615) 460-HELP (4357)

About Centerstone

Centerstone (www.centerstone.org), a not-for-profit organization is the nation's largest provider of community-based behavioral healthcare. With a history that spans over fifty years, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to more than 64,000 individuals of all ages and their families annually. Children, adolescents, adults, seniors, and families all receive help from a multitude of different programs in more than 120 facilities and 150 partnership locations in Tennessee and Indiana. Centerstone is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in Tennessee and The Joint Commission in Indiana. For more information about Centerstone, please call toll free at (888) 291-4357.

About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone's wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone's Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, "Homicide Response." Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.