

DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE

A Series: Managing The Stress Of Modern Living  
**THE GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING**

David Burn, MS, NCC, CCMHC, LMHC  
Clinical & Operations Manager

This article was first published in the *Winter 2002 EAP Newsletter* and as an Opinion/Editorial in the *Eastside Journal*. As a result of positive feedback from readers, the EAP offers it again as part of a series on coping with stress.

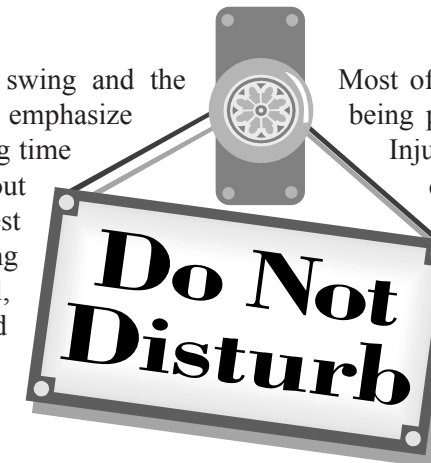
With the holiday season in full swing and the arrival of 2005, the EAP wants to emphasize the importance of making & taking time for self-care – now and throughout the coming year. Self care is best described as purposefully attending to your physical, emotional, spiritual, interpersonal, and financial well being. A balanced lifestyle helps people minimize the negative forces of stress.

For most people, the holiday season requires us to shift into emotional and physical overdrive. We do this to embrace the traditions of the season and manage the increased demands on our time. What's frequently overlooked this time of year is the importance of rest and replenishing the energies of the self.

In addition to the obligations of work and family, the holiday season can be a time of conflicting feelings (from anticipation & happiness to disappointment & sadness). When you're constantly on the go, attempting to satisfy the spoken and unspoken needs and expectations of partners, children, parents, siblings, friends, and co-workers, the price is often a sense of physical and/or emotional depletion.

The rewards and joys of doing for others are important to our sense of health and connectedness. On the other hand, a steady diet of focusing on others - without enough time for self care – increases our vulnerability to feelings such as emptiness, anxiety, dissatisfaction, agitation, or sadness. This is especially true during and soon after the holiday season.

Most of us know better than to run a marathon without being physically fit and doing the appropriate training. Injuries from over-extending yourself in the annual dash to the finish line of the holiday season are less physical but no less harmful to your emotional health and general well being.



Strategies for practicing self-care:

- Understand that self-care is not the same as selfishness. Self-care increases your effectiveness and restores your energy, to the benefit of others and yourself.
- Take frequent breaks to stretch and release the tension that collects in your mind & body. This is easy to do – even at work.
- Meditate or sit quietly - inhale slowly and deeply through your nostrils, and exhale slowly and fully - allowing troublesome thoughts to dissolve. As the writer Montaigne noted centuries ago: *The pleasantest things in the world are pleasant thoughts; and the great art of life is to have as many of them as possible.*

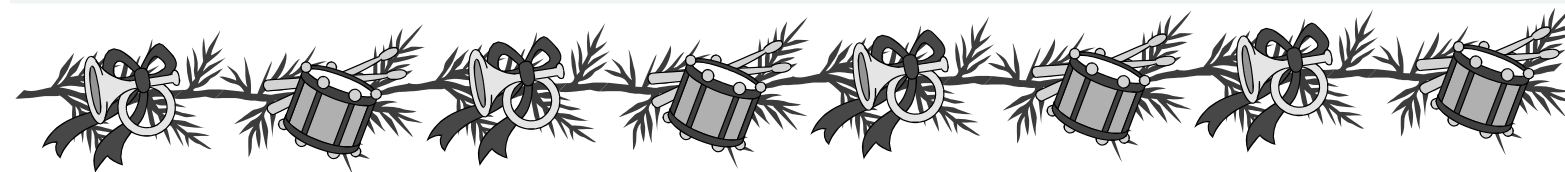
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**WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT YOUR EAP...**

- “EAP was great from beginning to end.” Tacoma, WA
- “My counselor and the EAP staff were extremely helpful.” Puyallup, WA
- “I would definitely use the EAP again. My issue was resolved.” Missoula, MT
- “I’ve had two very positive experiences using the EAP – by phone as well as on the Internet!” Ketchikan, AK
- “To the EAP counseling team: **THANK YOU** for everything you did for me (and for my family)!” Seattle, WA

WELCOME NEW GROUPS

- Acura of Lynnwood
- Alaska Marine Trucking
- Alaska Ocean Seafood
- Arrowhead Transfer
- Codesic Consulting
- Coal Creek Environmental
- Cross Culture Health Care Program
- DDB Seattle
- Green Diamond
- J.R. Hays & Sons
- Jefferson Healthcare
- LaClinica Community Health Center
- Larry's Markets
- Lowe Parker
- Lynden Family of Companies
- Michael Gabrielle Storyteller Productions
- Ocean Beauty Seafood
- Pat's Plumbing
- SeaTac Holiday Inn
- Sound Options
- The News Tribune
- The Puyallup Tribe
- Washington Floral Service



**First Choice Health Employee Assistance Program sends you and your family  
Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year**

**QUALITY, CONVENIENCE, & RELIABILITY**

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. If specific health or medical advice or assistance is desired, the services of a licensed healthcare professional should be sought. The information in the First Choice Health EAP Quarterly Newsletter is not meant to replace the advice or expertise of your physician or healthcare provider. If you are experiencing health problems or contemplating lifestyle changes such as diet or exercise, consult your healthcare provider ahead of time to ensure your well being.

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**Majid Mohadjer**, Web Developer - <http://www.1stchoiceeap.com>  
**Amanda Engel**, Desktop Publisher



**Bringing Balance to  
Work, Home, and Life**

- If you have an exercise routine, maintain it to help manage and neutralize holiday stress. Take short walks to rekindle your energies.
- Attend to medical or health conditions for which you are being treated. The holiday season is not a time to drop your guard or minimize your needs.
- Avoid foods that cause you to feel bloated and tired. Minimize your intake of alcohol and caffeine (which can rob you of energy, disrupt your sleep, and increase stress on your body and mind).
- Realize that inconvenience is a common feature of the post-9/11 world. Be prepared to adjust your expectations and responses accordingly. Be flexible and realistic.
- Establish traditions that are meaningful to you. Consider letting go of activities or obligations that cause you to feel as if you're merely "going through the motions."

- Avoid becoming over-committed or stretched too thin. Identify your priorities. Seek quality over quantity.
- Make use of the range of Employee Assistance Program services available to you. A few solution-focused visits can help you find ways to achieve greater balance, energy, optimism, and peace of mind.

To review all the articles in this series on *Managing the Stress of Modern Living*, please point your Internet browser to the EAP Newsletter archive at [www.1stchoicceap.com](http://www.1stchoicceap.com) or contact the EAP at 1-800-777-4114.



## Bullying in Schools: Facts for Parents of School-Aged Children

From time to time the EAP becomes aware of online education and training materials for families that are extremely valuable. We're pleased to report that the **Center for Substance Abuse Prevention** (through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) offers many user-friendly trainings and educational fact sheets on their Internet site at <http://pathwayscourses.samhas.gov>.

The list of offerings includes trainings and fact sheets about increasingly visible problems faced by individuals

and families. One of the very valuable trainings describes the phenomenon of bullying in the educational setting.

**Bullying in Schools:** Did you know that bullying in schools currently affects one-third of children in the United States in grades 6 through 10? Nearly **60 percent** of middle and high school students report that bullying is a problem in their school. Children and adolescents who are bullied appear to be at higher than average risk for depression, substance abuse, and anxiety-related disorders. Health and Human Services reports that 6 out of 10 kids identified as bullies in middle school are convicted of a crime by the time they reach age 24. The information is especially valuable for parents,

teachers, mental health professionals, and child advocates.

In addition to being your primary access point to a variety of Work/Life services, the First Choice Health EAP staff will always be pleased to research a topic or an issue that is of concern to you or your loved ones. Your EAP realizes that there are no "one size fits all" solutions to the conflicts and demands of modern life. First Choice Health EAP designs services around your specific needs and preferences.

Contact First Choice Health EAP – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – at (800) 777-4114 or online at [www.1stchoicceap.com](http://www.1stchoicceap.com).



## Identity Theft: Information You Need to Know

According to the FTC, identity theft occurs when someone uses another individual's personal information without authority to do so (fraudulently). The financial, legal, credit, and privacy complications can be extremely serious for individual consumers and families. The EAP offers this information to help you protect your information and resources.

According to identity theft experts, consumer name, date of birth, addresses, driver's license data, credit and debit card numbers, social security numbers and a variety of other ID numbers can be used fraudulently. Identity theft happens every day. With more than 12 million cases estimated as of 2003, the increasing frequency is considered "epidemic."

Criminals not only gain access to sources of online information, they are known to steal mail and even sift through trash or garbage for usable information. Identity thieves use stolen information to open lines of credit, access bank accounts, establish cellular phone service, rent vehicles and equipment, and pay for travel and accommodations.

If this happens to you or a loved one, the resulting bills, penalties, taxes, potential legal fees, and time spent clearing your name and credit history can be staggering. Here are some ways to minimize your risk:

- Become selective when sharing information. Know how the information you provide will be used and with whom it will be shared.
- Safeguard your Social Security Number. It is a primary source of identification and is often directly tied to your financial, employment, medical, military, educational, and credit history.
- Never provide credit card information or personal data by telephone or online unless you initiated the transaction and have knowledge about the person or company with whom you are doing business.
- Use the tools of technology to enhance security and privacy on the Internet. Talk to a computer guru about how to upgrade your software or follow this link to a useful article: [http://www.eff.org/Privacy/eff\\_privacy\\_top\\_12.html](http://www.eff.org/Privacy/eff_privacy_top_12.html).

- Be vigilant. Check your credit report at least once per year (the 3 major credit reporting organizations are Equifax, Trans Union, and Experian). Recent legislation (applicable to many but not all states) makes one credit report per year (from each of the above organizations) available to consumers at no cost. Call 877-322-8228 or go to [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) for more detail.
- Scan the report for irregularities or misinformation. Contact creditors immediately to correct mistakes or report fraud. Be sure to close inactive accounts.
- Don't discard your mail in the garbage! Shred everything you don't retain.

If you have questions about or need to report a suspected case of identity theft, contact the *Office of the Attorney General* in your state. For more information about how to protect against identity theft, contact the EAP at (800) 777-4114.

Information from the Social Security Administration, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Government of Canada was used in preparing this article.

## Consumer Credit Resources

Overspending and excess debt can be a distraction and source of distress for families and individuals. First Choice Health EAP is aware that the holiday gift-giving season can magnify existing financial pressures for many employee families. The EAP reminds you that confidential resources and helpful information about managing debt or living within your budget are just a phone call away.

Regardless of where you live, the EAP can connect you to credible and effective resources for managing consumer debt. Protect your credit rating! For access to a local consumer credit counseling and debt specialist, contact the EAP at (800) 777-4114, or online at [www.1stchoicceap.com](http://www.1stchoicceap.com).

First Choice Health EAP services are available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, and our staff members look forward to the opportunity to meet your needs.

*"It's not a question of can or cannot but a question of will I or won't I. Everything is a choice. Choose wisely."*  
- Anonymous