

Institute for Disability Studies  
ShareCare Notes  
December 9, 2005

## Making the Most of Your Holidays!

\* Upcoming events: Holiday Open House, Dec. 16, 2005 from 2 - 4 p.m. Everyone is invited. Bring your friends. If you would like to bring your favorite holiday snack, please e-mail Christy at [Christy.Harrison@usm.edu](mailto:Christy.Harrison@usm.edu) or call her at (601) 266-6490.

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#### 1) Holiday Tips

This is one of the busiest seasons of the year, and being a caregiver adds another layer of responsibility. It is important that we don't overload ourselves with too much. Here are some tips to help you avoid stress.

\_ Acknowledge your feelings. If a loved one has recently died or you aren't near loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's okay now and then to take time just to cry or express your feelings. You don't have to force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season. Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for several weeks, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional. You may have depression.

\_ Seek support. If you feel isolated or down, seek out family members and friends, or community, religious or social services. They can offer support and companionship. Consider volunteering at a community or religious function. Getting involved and helping others can lift your spirits and broaden your social circle. Also, enlist support for organizing holiday gatherings, as well as meal preparation and cleanup. You don't have to go it alone. Don't be a martyr.

\_ Be realistic. As families change and grow, traditions often change as well. Hold on to those you can, if you want to. But understand that in some cases that may no longer be possible. Perhaps your entire extended family can't gather together at your house. Instead, find new ways to celebrate together from afar, such as sharing pictures, e-mails or videotapes.

\_ Set differences aside. Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. With stress and activity levels high, the holidays might not be conducive to making quality time for relationships. And be understanding if others get upset or

distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress too.

\_ Stick to a budget. Before you go shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend on gifts and other items. Then be sure to stick to your budget. If you don't, you could feel anxious and tense for months afterward as you struggle to pay the bills. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.

\_ Plan ahead. Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make one big food-shopping trip. That'll help prevent a last-minute scramble to buy forgotten ingredients — and you'll have time to make another pie if the first one's a flop. Allow extra time for travel so that delays won't worsen your stress.

\_ Learn to say no. Believe it or not, people will understand if you can't do certain projects or activities. If you say yes only to what you really want to do, you'll avoid feeling resentful and overwhelmed. If it's really not possible to say no to something — your boss asks you to work overtime — try to remove something from your agenda to make up for the lost time.

\_ Don't abandon healthy habits. Don't let the holidays become a dietary free-for-all. Some indulgence is okay, but over-indulgence may add to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks. Continue to get plenty of sleep and schedule time for physical activity.

\_ Take a breather. While you may not have time every day for a silent night, make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Steal away to a quiet place, even if it's the bathroom, for a few moments of solitude. Take a walk at night and stargaze. Listen to soothing music. Find something that clears your mind, slows your breathing and restores your calm.

\_ Forget about perfection. Holiday TV specials are filled with happy endings. But in real life, people don't usually resolve problems within an hour or two. Something always comes up. You may get stuck late at the office and miss your daughter's school play, your sister may dredge up an old argument, you may forget to put nuts in the cake, and your mother may criticize how you and your partner are raising the kids. All in the same day. Expect and accept imperfections.

## 2) Preserving Your Memories Through Photography

On Nov. 29 and Dec. 7, Brent Wallace from Forrest General presented “Preserving Your Memories Through Photography.” Here are some of the tips he gave us about how to preserve your memories:

- When processing pictures, shop around for a good lab.

- Store your photos in a dry, dark, and cool place.
- Use archival material (acid free or archival labels).
- Frame your pictures with mats and glass to avoid photos sticking to glass.
- Don't glue your pictures down.
- When storing digital pictures, DVDs last longer than CDs.
- When using an inkjet printer, buy the same paper and ink as your printer.
- Good software: Adobe Photo Elements 4 and Picasa2 by Google (this one is free!)
- For storing photos online use: webshots or shutterfly

Also, on Nov. 30 Rich Baker from IDS gave us tips on picking a good digital camera and taking good photos. Some of his tips were:

- \* Before buying, decide what you are looking for in a camera. If you want a family camera for general photos, look for a solid 5 mega pixel camera from a company you trust.
- \* Go online and look at customer reviews on cameras you like. Pay special attention to user reviews. Professional reviews are useful but can bog you down with technical jargon.
- \* After the "mega pixel" selection, the lens is the most important part of the camera. Some point-and-shoot cameras have professional lenses like "Carl Zeiss" lenses.
- \* Get at least a 3X optical zoom lens and pay no attention to the digital zoom claim from the salesman or manufacturer.
- \* Be prepared to purchase a larger memory card and an extra battery for your camera. The memory and battery that come with the camera won't let you take advantage of the full digital photography experience.
- \* When you take photos of people, focus on the eyes.
- \* Use the 1/3 alignment rule for a pleasing photo composition.
- \* Try shooting photos from different perspectives to make the shots interesting. Try taking photos without looking at or through the camera; just point at the subject from the floor or above your head. These are called oblique shots.
- \* For group shots, take multiple photos to raise the likelihood of capturing at least one good shot. People blink; the more people in a shot results in the higher probability that someone will blink during the shot. Digital photos are free and often, quantity can result in quality.
- \* Look online for free image handling software downloads of "FastStone Image Viewer" and "IrfanView" at [www.download.com](http://www.download.com).

We appreciate both Brent's and Rich's time and effort put into their presentations. They both did a great job.