

## **DE-LAP ZONE: Oh No, It Is The Happy Holiday Season Again – Can I Get It All Done?**

**By: Carol P. Waldhauser**

**It is the week of Thanksgiving. John prosecuted a very difficult murder case. By Wednesday morning the jury returned a verdict and it was “not guilty”. Tired and disappointed, John decided to leave the office early to prepare for the family Thanksgiving Dinner. He was hosting Thanksgiving this year for more than 25 family and friends. John was especially grateful this year because in today’s economic climate, he still had his position and could afford to put food on the table.**

**As Thanksgiving eve turned into Thanksgiving Day, John had everything under control. Both family and friends began to arrive. A chilly day, John decided to use the fireplace for the first time this fall. His guest were warm and from the looks on their faces enjoying the company.**

**By 3:00 p.m. Great Granny asked: “Where’s the turkey?” Suddenly, John thought it odd that he did not smell the aroma of the turkey baking nor the pumpkin and apple pies browning. He had not checked in the kitchen for at least 45 minutes with company arriving, etc. As John opened the oven door, he did not feel heat. In fact, John realized that the turkey, along with the pies stopped baking since the last time he checked. It seems that the oven was broke, the turkey was raw and the pies still frozen.**

**Rather than have this unpredictable occurrence ruin his day, as well as his guests, John decided to implement some Holiday Survival skills. Immediately, John defrosted chicken in the microwave and fired up the grill. His guests enjoyed their non-traditional holiday meal, laughed, talked and focused on the assortment of delicious holiday cookies bought at the local market. Not even Great Granny missed the pies. Rather, she said it was the best Thanksgiving dinner that she had in years. Moral of the story – don’t be a perfectionist and instead go with the flow.**

**For many, the Holidays are a time of unending planning and festive partying; while for others, it is a time of stress, anxiety and even the blues. Family issues. Weight gain. What to buy for your elder relatives how need for nothing. And, of course, many believe that their holiday celebrations must be a photocopy of a Norman Rockwell Print or other holiday greeting card. Needless to say, this causes much stress, anxiety and even the blues.**

## **THE PROBLEM**

**Generally, the majority of us enjoy buying and making gifts, going to parties, baking cookies and pies, watching football games and seeing friends. However too much – even of these good things – can cause a lot of stress to an already hectic life. Plus not everything about the holiday season is pleasant. The holiday season can magnify aspects of unpleasant feelings of our everyday life. In other words, if we sometimes feel lonely; during the holidays we may feel especially lonely. If we miss a friend and/or family member (including our cherished pets) we miss them most of all during the holiday season. Plus, the bringing in of a new year puts focus on issues that have bothered us throughout the year.**

## **THE SOLUTION**

**To help you clarify what really gets under your skin about the holidays, Harvard stress expert Alice Domar, PhD, has put together a list of Family Dos and Don'ts some that are listed below:**

**Don't cling to visions of a Norman Rockwell family moment. That happens only in paintings.**

**Do consider family problems when planning celebratory gatherings. If your brother drinks too much avoid a dinner party and throw a dry holiday brunch instead.**

**Don't travel out of guilt. Have an honest conversation with your family about how difficult it is for you to make a trip during the holidays. Suggest visiting say, in February, when you'll have more time to really see one another. If they don't understand, consider that there may be something wrong on their end.**

**Do be flexible with you partner. Some traditions are definitely worth fight for – but you may be able to let others go.**

**Don't force yourself to revel. If office parties or family gatherings are painful, honor your need to celebrate in your own private way.**

**Don't isolate yourself. Seek out kindred souls and spend time with them. If you're newly divorced, join a support group, volunteer at a homeless shelter, or shop for elderly neighbors so you have some human contact.**

#### **Gift Dos and Don'ts**

**Don't spend randomly. Set a limit for gifts and stick to it.**

**Do talk with your children before the season begins about realistic expectation...**

**Do use a personal shopper if you can afford one, or buy presents online**

**Don't hesitate to buy the same gift for several people on your list – as long as they don't know one another, who cares?**

**Do take one vacation day early in the holiday season to get all your shopping finished so you can avoid the crowds or 11<sup>th</sup> hour pressure.**

#### **Expectation Dos and Don'ts**

**Do remind yourself that the holidays may have been so wonderful in childhood because you had no responsibility for making the magic. If you have grown-up expectations, you won't be so disappointed.**

**Do make a list of all your traditions, from decorating to caroling. Keep the ones you love (forget about impressing other people), and cross out the ones you don't.**

**Don't feel sorry for yourself if you have no parties to go to. Throw your own, and feel good inviting others who may not have invitations themselves.**

**Do have compassion for yourself during the holidays. If you're not in a celebratory mood – you're not the only one.**

**Do try returning to your old church, synagogue or mosque if you're feeling spiritually disconnected; if that doesn't work, go with friends to their place of worship.**

**Don't feel pressured to make a spiritual connection during this holiday. Set it as a goal to work on next year. Knowing you have a plan will help you feel better immediately.**

**Finally, Do seek professional help if life doesn't seem worth living. Symptoms of Depression are: depressed or empty mood; Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities, changes in appetite or weight, disturbed sleep, slowed or restless movements, fatigue, loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, trouble in thinking, concentrating or making decisions and recurrent thoughts of death and suicide.**

**Should you or anyone you know want more information or help regarding this subject and other issues that may be affecting either your work productivity or personal life, call: The Delaware Lawyers Assistance Program (DE-LAP) at (302) 777-0124 or 1-877-24DELAP or our 24 hour hot-line number 1-877-652-2255 or visit our confidential web site at [www.de-lap.org](http://www.de-lap.org) and email me at [cwaldhauser@de-lap.org](mailto:cwaldhauser@de-lap.org). And, join us in November for the Wellness Factor where you can obtain coping tools for the holidays.**

**Wishing you a Happy, Healthy and Stress Free Holiday Season**