



The Dispatch is for informational purposes. Unit Safety Officers are encouraged to use the articles in The Dispatch as topics for their monthly safety briefings and discussions. Members may go [eServices - Learning Management System](#), click on "Go to AXIS," search for this month's The Dispatch, take the quiz, and receive safety education credit.

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The Theme for This Month's Dispatch is Holiday Stress. We hope to bring prevention, awareness, and coping techniques that come with the inevitable stress during the holiday season. These articles from Health Services, Chaplain Corps, and Safety provide beneficial information to our members for peaceful celebrations.

Featured Articles on Holiday Stress

Drunk Driving - The Most Preventable Accident/Crime There Is, but It Starts with You

By: Captain Eric Holtzclaw, OK-074

As we head into the holiday season, I want to preface this story with that "all legal age adults have the choice to responsibly consume alcoholic beverages and enjoy their fellowship with others and nothing in CAP regulations prevents this."

Here is my story that hopefully will make us all think just a little bit before you drink. In my Non-CAP, day-to-day job, I have been in Law Enforcement for the last 47 years and spent a substantial portion of that time patrolling the streets, arresting drunk drivers, and working serious car crashes involving impaired drivers. A regular routine for me consist of human remains handling and death scene investigations, I have seen so many lives ruined due to drunk drivers. In the later years of my career, I have worked as a Court Room Deputy and experienced the complete process of what happens to an arrested drunk driver, after they sober up, and present themselves in the court room to be held responsible for what happened.

Although many legal aspects come into play in the courtroom drama during DUI cases, what is so interesting is that in every case, everything points to a poor avoidable choice and a lack of planning made by the driver. I normally cringe when the defense attorney's ask for lenience because the driver was just enjoying their night out with friends and "this was a victimless crime because no one got hurt," I am thinking this time the defendant and the other drivers were lucky. So many times, the innocent passengers and other motorists are not so lucky.

Every DUI case I have seen could have been avoided if some sort of responsible planning had been made prior to even going out to the event. There are so many alternatives that can take place to prevent the impaired driver from getting behind the wheel. The preplanning should never start when you leave to go out for the evening or arrive at the bar or event.

The planning should start well before then.

Here are some tips you might consider if you anticipate driving to or from a place where you might indulge in the consumption of any alcohol beverages.

- Check out if Uber or taxi drivers are available.
- Have someone else who is not attending the event to drive you to and from wherever you are planning to go, so you won't have the pressure to drive your car.
- If visiting relatives, plan to stay with your hosts or family for the night so you won't have to drive after consuming alcohol.
- Ensure you have a wingman to look out for you and you look out for them. If you are riding with a designated driver, make sure they don't fall prey to having one or two drinks. A designated driver needs to have the willpower to stay sober during the entire gathering.
- All planning should take place before the social occasion. After folks start consuming alcohol, rational thinking normally ceases in so many ways.

The holidays are here and if you want to drink and enjoy yourself, avoid the stress by following these tips to avoid serious consequences.

To my fellow CAP Volunteers,

Have a Merry and Wonderful and Safe Holiday Season! Remember, advance planning and

"Think before you Drink!!"

Cheers!

Several of Capt Eric Holtzclaw's accomplishments include:

Serving on the NHQ National Safety Team and Assistant Safety Officer for the Oklahoma Wing as a volunteer, he has a full-time job as a certified Standard Field Sobriety Training (SFST) Instructor and Level 3 DUI Investigator with the State of Oklahoma. He has been actively supporting Impaired Driving prevention actions and education initiatives, as a police officer at the federal, county, and municipal level.

The Holidays, Stress and You

By: Col Robert Castle, Senior Safety Advisor, NHQ-001

The holiday season brings many different emotions to each of us. They can encompass the full range of human emotions. The holidays may also increase the normal level of stress we experience daily.

So, how can we lower stress or at least stay at pre-holiday levels?

Avoid Procrastinating

Waiting until 7pm on Christmas Eve to start doing your shopping is guaranteed to raise your stress.

Just finding a place to park can be frustrating, maddening and lead to road (parking lot?) rage and encounters with crazed shoppers and law enforcement that should be avoided.

Select Appropriate Gifts

Getting your loved one a deluxe, turbo, dual bag vacuum cleaner will most likely not do anything to lower your stress.

Impractical gifts (jewelry, spa treatments, new "toys" etc.) will generally keep you both happy.

Christmas Decorations

You'll find that leaving the decorations up year-round will lower stress since there will be no deadlines to have them up or take them down. Periodic touch up will have them looking fresh when family arrives for the actual holidays.

Just say "NO!"

It's not necessary to attend more than five holiday parties.

Fruitcake

While some are fond of fruitcake (granted, it's an acquired taste), others are highly averse to receiving fruitcakes as gifts. Best to select another gift to give (see above). If you are gifted one that you don't want or don't know what to do with (I've been told they make good fertilizer) contact [the CAP Safety Team](#) for instructions on shipping (sorry, CAPNHQ cannot pay shipping costs).

Stay Within Your Budget

Establish a reasonable budget for gifts and stick to it (despite the reference above to impractical gifts).

In Conclusion

While this article was written (somewhat) in jest, the holidays can be stressful and indeed depressing for some of our members.

If someone appears stressed, just asking what they need can help relieve some of the pressure. A simple gesture such sending a greeting card can remind them that they're not alone and that they are cared about.

Keep an eye out for one another. Be a good wingman...all year long!

Holiday Stress and Being Resilient

By: Ch Maj. Michael Morison, PCR-001

In the United States, December is celebrated as a Holiday Season. Different beliefs celebrate this season for various reasons. Whether Christian (birth of Jesus), Judaism (the Maccabean revolt), Buddhist (enlightenment), Wiccan/Neo Pagan (Winter Solstice and rebirth of the Sun), or those who culturally celebrate the season in a secular way. Words often used to depict that the reasons for the season are family, peace, love, best wishes, and a happy new year.

The holidays are meant to be a time of celebration and reflection though it is not an uncommon experience for this to be a source of many stressors.

One may feel obligated to fulfill as many social, work, and family expectations as possible. Or, you may wonder why you have not been invited to be a part of some events. There is the stress to provide a perfect Christmas in terms of family traditions, ritual obligations, hosting socials, and/or providing the best gifts.

Everyone is vulnerable to being caught by the **expectation trap** of the holiday season.

What can we do?

Spiritual Perspective

Holiday resilience begins with caring for your spirit, paying attention to whatever it is that gives you your purpose for living. It is taking a moment to reconnect with what **your reason for the season** is. What is the gift that you wish to share this holiday season – with your family, your coworkers, and your social groups?

A former professor often said that “to be is to be with.” It was a challenge to be present in the moment with another. This is a season that is focused on being rather than doing. A season for compassionately connecting with the others we encounter.

Living Perspective

There are a variety of resilience skills which are available for dealing with holiday stressors.

1. **Time Out.** Visualize what you would like your season and its activities to look like. Do this before the season begins or as early as you can for the current season. Plan time outs during the season to reflect, read, and listen to uplifting and inspirational thoughts for the season.
2. **Rest.** Plan appropriate time for rest. Rest is one of the most significant factors for resilient living and thinking. Reserve the time so that you can genuinely enjoy and bring your best self to the various celebrations.
3. **Plan your season.** Be careful about what you commit to and why. Prioritize not overcommitting and thereby risking the loss of joy and gratitude that belongs to you. Politely refuse what does not make sense for you. You want to bring your best self, to be fully present in the moment when you are with others, you want to enjoy and treasure those moments. Your planning also impacts the joys and memories of those around you as well.

4. **Reframe.** Often, we encounter others who have left us frustrated or unpleasant. Knowing that you will meet them again during holiday gatherings, do not simply ignore or write them off. Avoid, or redirect, a conversation away from topics that will lead to disagreement such as politics, religion, etc. This is an opportunity to begin to build a bridge. You may be surprised at what might happen.
5. **Engaging Conversation.** Try to connect by avoiding small talk and asking open-ended questions. Asking a person who they admire and why, or a youth about who their favorite superhero is and why and be ready to share your answer as well.
6. **Gifting.** When purchasing gifts, it is not the gift, it is about **why** you are giving that gift to that person. The gift is a tangible manifestation of your care and attentiveness for that person. It is the personalization of a holiday card with a couple of sentences. The notice of something the recipient will recognize how you know and feel about them. In short, it is the investment of yourself in the selection to communicate to that person how important they are to you. This covers the spectrum of gift giving from expensive items to an idea of homemade cookies (instead of the store bought) that you bring to the office.

Gift giving is a personal investment of self.

You also need to be able to receive a gift from another. This is the interpersonal connection that is bi-directional. When receiving a gift, one should be open to their wish to share with us. And the recipient should be demonstratively grateful for the thought and intent of the other.

Holiday Season

This article is a strategic guide for preparing to be resilient, enjoying the holiday season and to enter the season with a reason and purpose. Other tactical skills for resilience still come into play day to day (i.e., take a breath and count to four before saying something, reframe the moment giving a question of doubt to the other, being mindful to be present in each moment to stay engaged with another).

The Holiday Season is a most wonderful time of the year when we can bring our best self to the season. It is a celebration that can strengthen our belief, connect us more deeply with family and friends, provide hope for the future, and leave us with a sense of joy and wonder.

Happy Holidays to you!

Holiday Stress - Interesting Study Results

By: Lt. Col. Gordon Helm, CAP HSAT PIO, AZ-013

How much stress do you feel during this holiday season? Well, you won't be surprised to learn that the holidays cause a wide variety of stress on you, your family, friends, virtually everyone who participates.

Eight in ten Americans say that expectations and events around the holidays cause them to feel increased stress.

Almost half of them report that financial issues are the main cause of their stress around the holidays, according to a study by Sleepopolis, a reviewer of sleep mattresses. Their November 2023 study of over 1,000 adults on their holiday wellness habits found some interesting information, including a significant upward trend from their 2021 study that found financial factors were the top holiday stressors of 28 percent.

Over half of people plan on traveling to visit friends and family this holiday season, and most of them would rather stay in a hotel.

So how can you cope with the unavoidable stress associated with this season?

The American Psychiatric Association lists seven coping strategies to bolster your mental Health:

1. **Practice mindfulness and meditation.** This can be particularly helpful if you are traveling or dealing with an unusual schedule.
2. **It's OK to say NO.** It's important to both prioritize what brings you joy and emotional recharge, and then simplify if you can.
3. **Take a break.** If you see things taking a turn for the worse, try not to let it escalate.
4. **Get some fresh air and sunlight.** That's easy here in the Southwest, but further north winter months tend to be dark and dreary. Get outside and find some sun.
5. **If you are in therapy, stay in therapy.** Enough said.
6. **Grief and loss.** The holiday season tends to focus on loved ones, and many have a challenging time adjusting to loss. Honoring and celebrating them creates a more positive thought during the holidays.
7. **Financial stress.** Holiday spending many times leaves people in debt. Instead of one gift per person, consider a Secret Santa, instead of expensive gifts, consider handmade items, which may carry special meaning to those receiving them.

[The seven ways to cope with holiday stress](#) came from a December 2022 article by the American Psychiatric Association.

The study of 1,025 American adults was conducted by Dr. Shelby Harris, a board-certified clinical psychologist and Associate Professor of Neurology and Psychology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. She used CloudResearch's Connect with a respondent pool of 50.5 percent women, 47.7 percent men and 1.8 percent who identified as another gender.

The study can be found HERE. <https://sleepopolis.com/education/holiday-sleep-survey/#holiday>.

****Message to Safety Officers from Chaplain Corps****

We had technical glitches when uploading the video last month. With the double holidays we wanted to be sure there is adequate time to show the second video and the third.

The series will resume with the third video in January 2024.

Thank you for your understanding and patience.

How Cold Is Too Cold for Safe CAP Operations?

By: Lt. Col. Gordon Helm, CAP HSAT PIO, AZ-013

I was just sent a Federal Aviation Administration article to improve safety during UAS (drone) operations in cold weather. But it got me thinking that almost every Civil Air Patrol operation involving activities in the cold could be included. The key is being proactive.

The FAA produced a Safety Briefing called "How cold is too cold to drone on?" It was written by Rebekah Waters of *FAA Safety Briefing Magazine*. She writes that her New England parents taught her how to handle winter weather through proactive preparation. "Weather is always a factor for aircraft, including drones – clouds, fog, or strong winds could leave you grounded," Waters writes. "As the temperatures drop, there are even more factors to consider before takeoff."



Some of those factors include:

1. Battery use and battery life
2. Electrical components
3. Ice formations
4. Rain, sleet, hail, snow

There are some benefits, too. Cold weather does give better takeoff and flight performance along with less turbulence. There are lots of items to consider this winter, as our Civil Air Patrol members take to the skies. Ms. Waters' article, located [HERE](#) - [How cold is too cold to drone on?](#)