

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Dos and Don'ts from Clark Griswold on Holiday Stress

Clark Griswold from National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation has much to teach us about how to manage the holiday, by being a great example of what not to do, for the most part. Though Clark has some great moments of really enjoying his Christmas unfortunately he spends a lot of time stressed to the max! From the financial stresses, to the feud with his neighbors, and his quest for perfection all added up to be just a little to much to handle for Mr. Griswold.

Luckily from his misfortune we can learn a few things about how to manage the holidays.

All of Clark's challenges seem to be rooted in his main quest for the quintessential perfect family holiday. A great aspiration for any family, though so often it leaves people and families wishing for something they may not be able to attain.

Expectations are powerful, and setting realistic ones can be life changing. This applies over the holidays but also for life overall. It's hard not to get excited about the possibility of something, such as a new pool for the Griswold's. Though Clark's honestly mistake was to promise something he wasn't fully prepared or able to follow through on. It's entertaining to watch how he handles this situation in the movie, and it's also helpful to learn from his experience.

How could he have handled this and other situations better?

Be Patient

It can be incredibly tempting to make promises based on things that are supposed to happen, such as a Christmas bonuses or the $50 you usually get from a grandparent or aunt for a holiday. Unfortunately these things are often very uncertain, even if they've happened in the past, you can't count on them. It's important to keep your promises based in reality and sometimes that means waiting a little bit longer to share them with others.

Accept Imperfections

Again it's a wonderful wish to have a picture perfect Christmas, but when something goes awry it helps to be ready and keep your cool. Be prepared to accept the tree may be lopsided, the meal may not start at exactly the right time, and that there may be some extra guests at dinner. The reality is that in most of these situations everything is going to be okay which can be hard to see in the moment when everything seems to be a mess. So prepare yourself ahead of time with a mantra or calming words to reassure yourself, all will be okay.

Stop Resisting

Resistance only makes everything more challenging. When you hit the moment where you feeling like you're fighting tooth and nail with your family to make it to that Christmas light festival, perhaps it's time to say it wasn't meant to happen this year. It's easy to get stuck in our ideals and expectations, and it's important to fight for what you want to do, but when it hits the point that all you feel like you're doing is fighting, it may be time to stop resisting and go with the flow.

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Enjoy Friends and Family

Keep in mind the things that are important during the holiday season, friends and family (chosen or of origin). The gift giving, the food and the fanfare is all grand, but truly what should make any holiday activity is the people involved. Occasionally it may be necessary to take a step back and remember that amongst all of the chaos and activity it's about the people in your life.