



## **How to Make the Most of the Holidays**

Whatever holiday tradition you celebrate, holidays typically hold the promise of family togetherness, love and happiness. But this time of year can be additionally stressful for those who work with the public. Here at Cracker Barrel, we work to provide a special dining experience for our guests. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, our personal stress can impact how we provide that experience. Taking care of ourselves by recognizing those seasonal challenges is a way to diminish the

pressure that accompanies this time of year – and better serve our guests, too! Below are some helpful suggestions on how to enhance your holidays this year.

### *1. Celebrate Sober.*

Holiday cheer need not be forced. Good hosts will support guests who wish to abstain from alcoholic beverages. That is your right, and many people choose to do just that. Overdrinking impairs your judgment, and this can happen more quickly than you think, even after a drink or two. Being careful insures your safe arrival home, and a clear head the next day!

### *2. Choose Carefully How to Share Holiday Activities*

When holiday activities are looked upon as obligations, you may be robbed of enjoying the holiday spirit. Allow yourself to choose which friends and family members you really want to spend the holidays with. Remember that the magic of this season will not change your less than perfect relationships.

### *3. Create New Traditions*

Past holidays can hold the magic of childhood memories. The present can force us to face some harsh realities. Sometimes the reason that the season isn't as magical is that, as an adult, you have the responsibility of making things happen. To help yourself live in the present, find new ways to celebrate. Perhaps old traditions need to be replaced by new ones. Learn to adjust to changes in your lifestyle and circle of friends.

### *4. Reach Out*

If you find yourself alone during the holidays, be creative: get involved with a local charity or attend worship services; visit a nursing home or elderly neighbor. Involve yourself in something you enjoy. Remember to stay active and open to providing companionship for others.

### *5. Take Control of Family Time*

Family togetherness is part of most holiday celebrations. The holidays can magnify recent rifts in family relationships, or bring up old disagreements. Think about limiting time with relatives with whom you have a tense relationship. Remember that the holidays only come around once a year, and make

adjustments when you can. You can choose to focus on the positive aspects of the holiday, and table arguments for another time.

#### *6. Shop Responsibly*

The Season is a time of sharing. Avoid the temptation to impress others with expensive gifts. You will be loved just as much by doing something special for others instead --AND, you won't feel guilty and overwhelmed afterward for overspending when the bills arrive! Before making your purchase, pay attention to your reasons for buying a certain gift. Try using cash for all purchases.

#### *7. Accept Your Limitations*

Concern for the less fortunate is heightened during the holiday season. You will be asked to contribute to worthy causes, and you will be put in the position of feeling both touched and manipulated. Decide what you can realistically contribute. Recognize your limitations to avoid feeling guilty for not responding to every request. Consider volunteering your time, rather than making a monetary donation.

#### *8. Decide Between the In-Laws*

Every married couple knows that it is not uncommon to feel pulled in different directions. Take a realistic view of your needs and those of your spouse. Compare your needs to those of other family members. Compromise when you can, but recognize that family activities may need to change.

#### *9. Make Shopping Easier*

To avoid the contagious rush of holiday shopping, make purchases during the middle of the week, when stores are less crowded. Shop by mail. Purchase practical gifts that can be found at grocery or hardware stores. Select items that won't require a lot of gift-wrapping.

#### *10. Share Chores*

Holiday traditions mean additional chores -- shopping, cooking, decorating...and cleaning up! Decide among family members an equitable division of labor. Try to space out chores so that no one will be subject to excessive fatigue. Agree who will be "in charge" of certain tasks. Remember that real friends and close family are more interested in being with YOU than how "perfect" your home or table may look.

#### *11. Set Boundaries*

Recognize your limits and reserve your right to say "no." Decide as early as possible what your holiday priorities will be. Get enough sleep, eat balanced meals and limit snacking. Given all of the roles you may play: employee, partner, parent, you do not have to add "counselor" to the list. Recognize that there are limits to how much support you can be for others who are struggling. Remember the importance of quiet, reflective time, and realize that trying to "do it all" will only create more stress and diminish the joy of the season.

### *12. Look Ahead*

As the holidays come to a close, feelings of disappointment may set in. These feelings, if not resolved quickly, can lead to a shift from 'the blues' to depression. To prevent this, set new goals for the coming year. Look ahead, but if you ever feel unable to shake your mood, please reach out for help. If friends and family are not available, or you prefer not to talk with them, call the EAP.