**Caring for Loved Ones over the Holidays**

*By Lori Strom*

Are you the primary caregiver of an elder grandparent, parent, ill spouse/partner, child with special needs, friends or other family members you love unconditionally? It is admirable that you have agreed to this responsibility. Yet, admit it, there are times when your life can feel stressful and overwhelming, and the holidays can add more burden.

Here are some quick tips to reduce your holiday stress:

- **Try to maintain your daily routines.**
- **Keep meal and food routines consistent.** (If they’re used to an early morning breakfast, don’t make them wait for the big brunch at noon).
- **Keep traditions if you can, but don’t be afraid to try something new, less stressful, and more relaxed; you’ll be creating a new way of celebrating.**
- **Plan in advance; holiday tasks can be assigned to others. Ask for help!** (Which can include hiring someone through Care.com/msu).
- **If you have overnight guests, keep your loved one in their own sleeping space.**
- **Give your loved one opportunities for input.** Whenever possible, ask for their opinion to keep them involved.
- **Maintain cordial dinner conversation.** Don’t be afraid to “agree to disagree.” Divisive topics can cause additional stress to you and your loved one.
- **Keep a sense of humor. Laugh, don’t cry – even when you realize you forgot to take the neck and giblets out of the turkey before cooking it.**
- **Enforce a technology free day.** Instead of looking at personal devices, encourage everyone to play table games, reminisce and laugh about your favorite memories. You could also take a family walk, dance, and be silly together.
- **Think of unique ways to connect with one another in ways that involve all of your loved ones and their needs.**

Most importantly, take time for yourself. Carve out an hour each day to do an activity you love. Take a deep breath and practice gratefulness for the large and small joys in your life.

Happy Holidays
In efforts to support its workforce, Michigan State University provides breastfeeding accommodations at over 60 locations across campus and in the state of Michigan. The Michigan Breastfeeding Network recently honored MSU with a Michigan Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace Award for its contributions towards creating a more breastfeeding-friendly Michigan. MSU is the first university in the state of Michigan to receive this prestigious award.

An award ceremony took place on Thursday, November 30, 2017 at the MSU Union. At the ceremony, parents and their children gathered with the WorkLife Office staff and members of the Women’s Advisory Committee for Support Staff (WACSS) to celebrate this award. WACSS (previously Women’s Advisory Committee for Finance, Personnel, and Operations), was instrumental in creating a breastfeeding-friendly environment at MSU.

For more information about the many breastfeeding support resources offered at MSU, please visit the WorkLife Office website at https://worklife.msu.edu/family-care/kids-parents/breastfeeding. This page includes a link to the Breastfeeding Room Location Map, for those in search of a private space to feed or pump.

Congratulations, Michigan State University and the many individuals, parents, and administrators who work diligently to create a breastfeeding-friendly environment for the Michigan State University community.
Management and Flexibility Advice with Jessica Nakfour

As a Human Resources manager for MSU Extension, Jessica Nakfour is no stranger to the unique challenges and joys of managing a team. Perhaps even more unique to Nakfour’s experience as a manager is her role in assisting other supervisors in juggling their teams’ varied schedules and working across distances large and small. MSU Extension employees are spread across the state of Michigan, but Nakfour has some great advice that translates across county lines, and is relevant for anyone considering a flexible work arrangement, such as telecommuting.

What is Nakfour’s primary pro-tip? Communication. She said, “Most of the people that we serve are not located within our building here on campus, so the use of strong communication via email, phone, and Zoom technology is imperative. Finding creative, non-traditional ways to stay connected and engaged with your staff when you’re not in the same office/building/county [is important].” She also said that calendaring is important—making sure everyone keeps their Outlook calendars up-to-date and shares it with their supervisor, and ideally the whole team. Whether someone is supervising a team or is an employee within that team, solid communication is critical.

For managers in particular, Nakfour recommends staying true to your values. She said, “I think you have to have your own guiding principles and then demonstrate them in the way that you interact with others.” In Nakfour’s case, these principles clearly include listening and meeting the needs of her staff (one of the many reasons she is a past recipient of the Outstanding Supervisor Award). She said, “I’ll always make the time for my staff, for me, my staff is my first priority. All of my other responsibilities are still priorities, but finding the time to complete them is on me and something I need to manage, but they shouldn’t take away from the time my staff needs from me. When your staff has questions or needs guidance, for me, they are always the first priority. I don’t want to become a roadblock in helping them move forward in the work that they are doing.” She also suggests, for new managers, that they spend time with their new staff and learn about them and their jobs. “I believe there are many assumptions made about how and why people do their work,” she said. Clearing that up on the front end also helps with communication down the road.

Nakfour also has some surefire tips for asking for a flexible work arrangement. “Go in with a plan, such as a written proposal outlining your specific request. Be clear on what you are asking for—for example, working remotely, a reduction in hours, etc. Is it a temporary arrangement or something more long-term?” Then she suggests that the manager and employee set up a trial period for the arrangement and talk to the rest of the team about how the arrangement might impact their work. “Some supervisors may be inclined to just say no. A trial period is a first step in attempting to accommodate the employees request. I recommend a 90 day trial period, which includes scheduled touch-point meetings along the way. In many ways, flexible work arrangements prove to be beneficial for all involved. I encourage employees to be optimistic and at least have a conversation with their supervisor, to not be afraid of bringing up the topic. At the end of the day, it might not work out, but at least you will have gone in with the best possible proposal and set yourself up to have the best possible conversation,” Nakfour said.

She believes in the positive power of working together as a team and being open to flexibility because, “One of the reasons that I’ve stayed with extension and wanted to stay with Extension, is that they’ve been very flexible with me and my family. Therefore I have a vested interest and commitment to Extension because of the opportunities that have been afforded to me.”

---

MSU Commuter Challenge

By Chloe White, CATA Clean Commute

Compete against fellow MSU students, faculty, and staff to see who can complete the most trips using clean transportation modes. We’re partnering with CATA’s Clean Commute Options Program and the MSU Bikes Service Center to bring you the MSU Green Commuters Fall Challenge. Weekly chances to earn prizes and up to $100 for the top commuter make participating in this challenge a no-brainer. Several in the MSU community are already participating, completing over 2,000 clean trips via carpooling, vanpooling, taking the bus, biking, walking, and even telecommuting! Join the challenge before it ends on December 15, 2017 following these steps.

1. Visit [http://cleancommute.rideamigos.com](http://cleancommute.rideamigos.com) and register for a profile.
2. Join the MSU network.
3. Visit the challenges page and click the big play button to get started.

Now all you have to do is log your trips using the calendar on the dashboard page or download the Commute Tracker mobile app. Questions? Contact Chloe White at CWhite@cata.org. Visit us on Facebook too!

---

**Total Trips**

| Modes: Bike, Carpool, Transit, Vanpool, Walk, Telework |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total Trips** | **2,020** |
| **Total Distance** | 37,340.0 mi |
| **CO2 Saved** | 10.9 tons |
| **Money Saved** | $16,101.29 |
| **Calories Burned** | 186,888 |
| **Participants** | 31 |

*The impact participants have made since the challenge started on September 18, 2017.*
MSU WORKLIFE
Brown Bag Discussions (December)

Social Security Solvency

AARP’s Melissa Seifert, who handles Government Affairs, will share current information about solvency of Social Security. What options are being discussed by the President and members of Congress to ensure you receive your full benefit? We will talk about myths of Social Security as well as answer questions about what AARP is doing to advocate for solvency.

Current Drug Trends: Alcohol & Marijuana

This session offers an engaging presentation with Prevention Specialist, Maureen Smith, about the latest trends in youth drug abuse, including household items commonly used as drug paraphernalia. Participants will also learn how drugs and alcohol impact brain development and about resources if drug or alcohol use is suspected.

DI D Y O U K N O W ?

WorkLife Office Social Media & Events Calendar

You can stay up to date on all of the WorkLife Office Initiatives on our website and social media accounts. For a complete listing of upcoming WorkLife events, visit our website: https://worklife.msu.edu. Interested in receiving weekly e-mails about upcoming programs and events? Join the WorkLife Listserv, by sending an email with the subject line “WorkLife Listserv” to: worklife@msu.edu. Be sure to indicate your name and email address. While you’re at it, be sure to follow us on social media!
Know the 10 Warning Signs

Alzheimer’s Association Seminar

Tuesday, December 12, 2017
6:00pm—7:30pm

Know the 10 Warning Signs is an introductory program that provides attendees with an understanding of the difference between age-related memory loss and Alzheimer’s and what to do if they or someone they know has signs of the disease.

Location: MSU Federal Credit Union-Farm Lane Branch Community Room (4825 E. Mt. Hope Road, East Lansing).

Co-sponsored with the MSU Federal Credit Union.

To register, visit: https://www.msufcu.org/events/

SAVE THE DATE

Academic Women’s Forum

“Boundary Negotiation as an Engine for Success in the Academic Workplace and in Life”

Tuesday, January 23, 2018
3:30PM—5:00PM
Chittenden Hall, Room 110

This highly interactive session will help participants think about the powerful role that boundaries play in succeeding (and being happy!) in your professional roles at MSU and in your personal life. Without boundaries, our productivity, relationships and health can suffer. When our boundaries are too strong, we can lose out on important opportunities in our professional and personal lives. At this session, a general framework for thinking about boundary negotiation will be provided, along with resources and strategies for participant use. Presenter: Dr. Melissa McDaniels, Graduate School.

Looking for a little help over winter break with:

- Eldercare
- Pet care
- Childcare
- Home maintenance?

As a Michigan State University faculty or staff member, you have free access to services provided by Care.com. Visit www.care.com/msu to sign-up with your MSU Net-ID today!

SAVE THE DATE

“Motivating Your Team to Move through Troubled Waters”

Wednesday, January 17, 2018
8:30AM—10:00AM
Chittenden Hall, Room 110

Leadership isn’t all honor and glory. More often, leadership requires you to slog through the muck with your team in less-than-ideal circumstances. And when times are tough, keeping your team motivated and focused to move forward can seem impossible. MSU Alumni Association Associate Director and past Kiwanis International President, Sue Petrisin, will share best practices for navigating through troubled waters and rallying your team to success—no matter whether you consider yourself a leader or not.