

The Holidays...and You

Opening words and Chalice lighting:

Holidays are an expensive trial of strength. The only satisfaction comes from survival.

Jonathan Miller

Welcome and check-in (A time to share what is on your mind in order to clear it and be in the present.)

Reading for discussion

According to research from the American Psychological Association (APA), three-fourths of American adults report moderate to high levels of stress. The holiday season adds stressors for many, which can negatively affect both physical and mental health.

In a recent Stress in America survey (APA, 2009), financial concerns were the leading source of stress for 71% of Americans during the holiday season. Other stressors include work, family responsibilities, painful memories, and being alone.

Lack of sleep is one result of a high-stress environment. A national study by SleepBetter.org found that one in six Americans (17%) is expected to lose sleep due to holiday-induced stress. The findings are a part of the group's Holiday Slumber Index, which measures the impact of the holidays on American's sleep patterns. Parents are the most susceptible, with 27% indicating that holiday stressors cause the sleep loss.

Questions for discussion

- How did you and your family celebrate the holidays when you were a child, and what impact did that have on your approach to the Holidays today, including your current 'traditions'?
- What are your holiday 'stressors'?
- What is your most –and/or least-favorite part of the Holidays?
- Is providing help or care to others part of your Holiday routine? Why, or why not?
- What would you want to be different about the Holidays-for you? What can you do to make that happen?
- How can we individually and as a group assist others in our community who are suffering from holiday stress?

Check-out (A time to share likes and wishes, such as “I like how we...” “I wish we would...”, or express how you felt about the group.)

Closing words and extinguishing the Chalice:

May each of us and our loved ones experience peace and happiness this holiday season.

Thanks to everyone for their participation and commitment to our group!