HR Newsletter

BLM/BIA/NPS/FWS-NIFC
Human Resources

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Special points of interest:

- December 26th: Federal Holiday, HR will be closed
- January 2nd: Federal Holiday, HR will be closed

OPM Benefits Open Season Reminder

The Federal Benefits open season runs thru December 12th. During this time, employees will have the ability to enroll or change their benefit plans, such as FEHB, FEDVIP and FSA.

- Review your FEHB plan option: There are some health plans that will be leaving the program. Employees who are enrolled in those plans must elect a new health benefit plan. Also, some plans are changing the area they cover or are changing their coverage options, therefore, employees need to review their health benefit plans to make sure they are aware of any changes to their plan.
- Re-enroll in FSA: If you elected FSA for 2011 and want to continue FSA for 2012, you MUST re-enroll. **Enrollment for FSA does not carry over from year to year.**
- Enroll or Cancel FEDVIP: If you did not enroll in a vision or dental plan and would like to, you must do this during open season. Also, if you elected a vision or dental plan for 2011 and do not want to continue it for 2012, you must cancel it during open season. **Note: You cannot cancel your FEDVIP coverage outside Open Season simply because you retire.**

Employees are encouraged to visit the OPM website for additional information.

http://www.opm.gov/insure/openseason/index.asp

Fitness Reimbursement—BLM

It is almost that time of year for employees who participate in the Fitness **Reimbursement** program to submit their information. Employees participating in the program and who are seeking reimbursement for 2011 should refer to IM No. FA IM-2012-001 for information on what is required for reimbursement.

Employees who have questions regarding this program should contact Michelle Cook at ext. 5518.

TSP Contribution Limits for 2012

Elective Deferral Limit: $17,000

Catch-up Contribution Limit: $5,500

For more information on TSP and contribution limits, visit the TSP website

https://www.tsp.gov/index.shtml

ER Corner: Stress, depression and the holidays: Tips for coping

Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your health. Being realistic, planning ahead and seeking support can help ward off stress and depression. The holiday season often brings unwelcome guests – stress and depression. And it is no wonder. The holidays present a dizzying array of demands – parties, shopping, bake, cleaning and entraining, to name just a few. With some practical tips, you can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would. When stress is at its peak, it is hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.

Acknowledge your feelings. If someone close to you has recently passed or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It is OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

Reach Out. If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.

Be realistic. The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones.

Set aside differences. Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry.

Stick to a budget. Before you go gift or food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then tick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.

Plan ahead. Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That will help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. Be sure to line up family or friends for party prep and cleanup.

Learn to say no. Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity.

Don't abandon healthy habits. Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties. Continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.

Take a breather. Make some time for yourself. Spending 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything your need to do.

Seek professional help if you need it. Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, unable to sleep and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, remember that you have the EAP program available to you and your family members.

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers so you can face them before they lead to a meltdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.

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We're on the Web!

http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/more/human_resources.html

EAP Consultants Inc.

The EAP program is available to NIFC employees working for BLM, BIA, NPS and FWS.

In the Employee Resources page, you will find valuable information such as: Request Confidential Counseling Services; Stress Management - Learn useful tips for managing life's stressful events; Healthy Exchange - Online library provides practical information to help with relationships, stress, job issues, parenting issues, and more;

To visit the EAP website, go to

http://www.eapconsultants.com/

In the right hand corner, click on Member Access, this will bring up a page that will ask you for our password.

The password is nifc