

## Don't Stress It!

How to Handle Holiday Stress

December 2008

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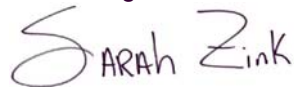
Tools to Restore Control

Dear Sarah:

This month's "Think Zink" is focused on reducing stress at the holidays, and anytime. I want to be clear: I'm one who celebrates Christmas, including both the religious and secular aspects of the holiday. You might celebrate Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, something else, or nothing at all. I'm not here to debate what the holidays are to you - I want to share how to get through stressful times, both at work and personally.

The goal is to take back control of your life, time and happiness. This newsletter has tips, tools and helpful ideas to make that possible.

Warm Regards,



Sarah Zink

P.S. Are you writing a newsletter and need some "snippets" of information? You are welcome to quote anything in this e-zine, provided you provide appropriate credit.

**Quick Links...**



**T**he bad news is: There's no such thing as work-life balance. I hate to be the one that breaks it to you, but that's the truth. I believe there is

control over the ever-changing chapters of your life, but balance implies that things are always even, and that's just not possible.

Apparently, the phrase "work-life balance" was first used in the US in 1986 to point out that too many people were making poor choices - unhealthy life choices. Specifically, many people were neglecting important areas of their lives, like family, friends and personal recreation (hobbies) in favor of work-related tasks.

I don't believe there can be balance when we have so much to choose from, and our choices change daily, so the goal isn't balance, it's about taking back control over when, where and how you work. It's about taking back control of your destiny, and not being tossed around by what others think you should do or be, OR by what you THINK others want you to do or be.

I've done some serious research to bring you the best information to help you make choices that reduce your stress at the holidays and re-focus your energy on what's important to you

[Who is Sarah Zink?](#)

**Setting Priorities**

What's truly important to you? Money, family, friends, hobbies? The answer to this question should be how you prioritize your time. For most of us, our job is simply a vehicle to provide the money to do what we like, for others, our job is our passion. Make sure that where you want to go in your life is n't suffering because of misplaced priorities. Compare your priorities with how you actually spend your time and money. If they don't match, then you're lying to yourself.

**Managing Your Time**

You will manage your time or your time will manage you. One way to take control of your time is to change your focus from inputs (time) to outputs (results).

The first step is to identify the non-negotiables of your time (i.e. "I will not work weekends" or "I will not miss Suzy's dance recitals").

The second step is to cost your time - figure out what one hour of your time is worth; then, when you are tempted to do a task, make sure it's worth doing yourself. If not, then it's worth not doing or it's worth paying someone else to do it!

Finally - block off your time and, except for emergencies, stick to it.

**Setting Boundaries**

Learn that it's ok to say "no" and that it's ok to stop sabotaging your time management. Practice saying no in a nice way. And when someone wants "just one minute" to talk to you about something, have them come back at a time that's more convenient for you.

**You can make more money, but once your time is gone, it's gone forever.**

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# Holiday Stress Busters

Simplify, Focus, Enjoy!

**Simplify:**

Pick one thing to do well, whether it's serving a sit-down dinner for 20 or helping your kids make a gingerbread house. Think about "what you'd really miss if it weren't part of your holiday season" and what you could live without, suggests Barbara Fiese, PhD, chair of psychology at Syracuse University, in upstate New York.

**Focus:**

"Instead of decking all the halls, concentrate on the one room of the house where you spend the most time," says Lisa Lelas, professional organizer and co-author of Simple Steps for Every Holiday (New American Library, 2004). If everybody hangs out in the den or family room, that's where the swag, garland, and antique train set should go. (Just put poinsettias in the other rooms).

**Enjoy!**

Be in the moment - When you're baking cookies, enjoy the sensation of your hands in the dough. When you're out shopping, really listen to the holiday carols. When you walk back to your car, feel the temperature of the air on your face," says Leslee Kagan, clinical nurse-practitioner at the Mind/Body Medical Institute in Boston. Being in the moment is the essence of mindfulness -- fully focused attention -- which is also key in reducing stress. After a few minutes of sensory indulgence, your heart rate will slow and your muscles will relax. What you're getting is a kind of mini meditation without having to sit down and close your eyes.

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