



## Season 1, Episode 1: Ways to Make our Holiday Season More Restful

Join our host, Megan Bergfeld, LCSW, ACM-SW, with Work/Life Connections-EAP as she interviews Julie Burton, LCSW, MHCC, also from Work/Life Connections-EAP, on ways we can manage stress to make our holidays more restful.

Megan Bergfeld - Hello, everyone. I'm Megan Bergfeld, clinical counselor with Work Life Connections, EAP. I'm excited to be your host for today. You've likely noticed that the holiday season is in full swing. I don't know about you, but this time of year tends to bring out the best and the worst in me. There's just so much going on, so many things to choose from. A season that's meant to bring joy and peace and reflection can easily become stressful and sometimes downright exhausting. Then we blink and it's the new year and we wonder where the time went. This month on Healthier You, we're going to discuss practical ways to make our holidays more restful. Our guest, Julie Burton, who's also a counselor in EAP, is here to help us talk through that.

Julie Burton - Thank you, Megan for having me here today to discuss ways to make our holiday season more restful. When I told my family that you had asked me to talk on this subject, they got a nice little chuckle because they all know that I struggle personally. I struggle with this every holiday season. I'm guilty, so I'm making these restful recommendations for myself just as much as I am for all of our listeners.

Megan Bergfeld - I am also guilty, it is one of the main reasons I was excited to talk about this subject this month. I think a lot of people tuning in will be able to relate to that. We can learn together, together as we go. So to start, what do we mean by making our holidays restful?

Julie Burton - So Meghan, I did a quick internet search for the definition of restful, and the Internet defines the word restful as something that has a quiet and soothing quality. Some synonyms for restful include relaxed, comfortable and peaceful. So, to make the holidays more restful, we have to shift our energy from the busyness to using that energy to create a more meaningful and calmer season.

Julie Burton - I like the sound of that. Don't you?

Megan Bergfeld - I really, really do. What gets in the way of having a restful holiday?

Julie Burton - Goodness, Meghan, so many things. And I think the key words, there are: "many things". We allow our schedules to get way to full and expect way too much of ourselves during the holidays. We can go overboard on things that just aren't necessary or not really important. It's like there's a mental checklist of all these things that we feel like we have to do to make ourselves feel the holiday was properly celebrated, and if we don't check those boxes, then some. Sometimes we feel like we failed. I know I'm guilty about

stressing over getting those family holiday cards out or running around town to find the the matching pajama pants for pictures. So many things that I know personally I could do without.

Megan Bergfeld - Yes, that sounds way too familiar. I love the idea of taking a more restful approach, taking some of that pressure off of us. But how do we make that happen amidst all the hustle and bustle? Could you share some of your favorite restful holiday tips?

Julie Burton - Absolutely, Meghan. First, I would recommend that you prioritize traditions that mean the most to you and your family. These are things you would not want the holidays to go without. Next, accept the fact that you're going to have to say no to some things and then finally find creative ways to lighten the load. Give yourself permission to use those disposable plates or serve store bought food. I could certainly make my family's homemade dinner roll recipe, but purchasing rolls that are pre-made from the grocery store will work just as well. For me, making my focus about being with the people that I love the most helps me make those small adjustments a little easier.

Megan Bergfeld - That sounds lovely. Julie, you mentioned prioritizing. Do you have any suggestions for how folks can determine their priorities for the season?

Julie Burton - Yeah. So like I said earlier, Meghan, prioritize the traditions that are the most meaningful to you and your family. I learned a little practice from a friend last year that was so helpful with this. She has everyone in her immediate family write down their favorite holiday tradition on a piece of paper. They all sort through those things, read them aloud together, and then they make plans to make sure that those traditions are done. It's important that what ends up on your calendar be things that bring you joy and serve as food for the soul. If it's going to stress you out or cause conflict, you might want to consider whether or not it's worth doing.

Megan Bergfeld - I can already think of some things I may need to take off my list this year, so I probably don't need to go to four different light displays. One would be sufficient. I don't need to find the best restaurant to do my New Year's celebration. I can stay at home and it will be fine. That would take a lot of pressure off, actually.

Julie Burton - Absolutely.

Megan Bergfeld - Before our last question of the day, how do we clearly set this standard with our loved ones without damaging our relationships for the rest of the year?

Julie Burton - Yeah, Meghan, that can be very tricky. That's a great question. I think, especially if we all of a sudden start saying no to the people that we've typically said yes to, it could rub them the wrong way. Do you know Dr. Jesse Turnbull from our children's hospital?

Megan Bergfeld - I do. I love her blog and her newsletter: Burning Bright Indeed.

Julie Burton - That's exactly where I got this thing that I was just about to tell you. So, she wrote earlier this year a three-pronged approach. This was taken from psychologist Dr. Nicole Le Para, the three-pronged approach to saying no goes like this. First, you have the appreciation, then the know and then the well wishes. So, Meghan, it would kind of look like this. This is an example. Thank you so much, Meghan, for inviting me. And unfortunately, my schedule is already very full, but I hope you have a great turnout. I suggest practicing these responses before the holiday invitations start coming in so that you're prepared and comfortable with that approach. The three-pronged approach.

Megan Bergfeld - Perfect. I read the edition of the newsletter, but I hadn't thought to apply it to the holiday, so we will include a link to that newsletter in the show notes for anybody who wants to look at that more closely. And that, I believe, concludes our discussion today. This has been very helpful. So thank you, Julie, for meeting with me on Healthier you.

Julie Burton - Thank you, Meghan, for giving me the opportunity to discuss ways to improve our holidays. It was helpful for me and I hope it was also helpful for you and I hope that all of us have a more relaxed and peaceful holiday season.