

Holiday Tips for Activity Professionals and Recreation Therapists

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This is a busy time of year for Activity Professionals and Recreation Professionals and I can emphasize with what you are probably going through right now and in the weeks to come. You all provide so much holiday cheer and quality of life. It is amazing how you continue to smile throughout the process of decorating the facility, wrapping large amounts of gifts, coordinating with dozens of community groups, while maintaining your regular workload and the ability to keep the festivity alive within yourself to share with your friends and family. It can be quite the challenge! So, please take a moment to enjoy the holiday season for yourself. Here are some tips to help you get through this hectic time of year.

- Maintain a daily list of things to do. Download a free things to do list at <http://www.recreativeresources.com/freeforms.htm>
- Avoid waiting until the last minute to buy and wrap resident gifts.
- Shop online (if possible) or ask volunteers to help.
- Utilize a gift giving tree.
- Ask churches, community groups, family members, etc, for donations.
- Take a trip to the dollar store if funds are really low.
- Buy wrapping paper after Christmas at clearance prices and wrap gifts as you buy them.
- Have a wrapping party with refreshments. Invite volunteer, staff, family members.
- Purchase holiday cards after Christmas at clearance prices and prepare them in September.
- Plan the holiday parties way in advance to assure you have the best entertainers!
- Don't overbook community groups. It's ok to ask them to come in January or another time of year.
- Involve residents, volunteers, facility staff and family members in the tree trimming and decorating.
- Have decorating contests to elicit support such as a tree trimming contest, unit decorating contest, door decorating contest, etc.
- Delegate, delegate, delegate!
- Learn to say no. Practice now-say "NO" out loud. You can do it! Go ahead. Say it again.... "NO"! Great job! Remember, you don't have to do it all, go to every party, or help with everything. Yes, be a team player, but remember, you have limitations.
- Schedule one or two personal days during the holidays. It's a must to make shopping easier for you with less crowded stores. If you are a director, allow your staff to take a day or two off as well to avoid call outs.
- Try to avoid overtime hours if possible. I know, I said, TRY!
- Schedule major projects after the first of the year. It's just not that important to categorize the video collection right now.
- Do as much as you can earlier in the week so you are not as tired when the weekend comes. You don't have to have big parties on Fridays!
- Schedule one to one time with some residents. Listening to residents share their life always inspires me when I'm overwhelmed.

- Take some time for yourself at work. Close your office door (if you're lucky enough to have one), do some deep breathing, put your feet up, have lunch **away** from your desk, go for a walk outside, etc.
- Laugh it off! Visit <http://humormatters.com/holiday.htm> for some holiday humor. For some great holiday riddles visit <http://www.diskuspublishing.com/riddle.html>
- Do something for yourself (hot bath, massage, manicure, aromatherapy, etc.)
- Get adequate sleep!
- Walk around the facility at night time to enjoy the holiday lights and décor. Everything looks so different at night.
- To avoid having to cancel routine programs because of last minute community groups wanting to schedule, maintain a list of all community groups and contacts. Call **them** in advance next year instead of waiting for them to schedule with you at the last minute. You may download a free Community Groups Contact Form at <http://www.recreativeresources.com/freeforms.htm>.
- Make sure all recreation staff has completed mandatory education **BEFORE** the beginning of the holiday season.
- You don't have to reinvent the wheel. Go ahead and utilize resources that are available to you. Join the Activity Resource Center at <http://www.recreativeresources.com/resourcecenter.htm>.
- If you waited too long to prepare this year, take a deep breath and take it one day at a time, but next time remember to start preparing in September.

I truly hope that you all get a chance to enjoy the holiday season and take some time for yourself. Happy Holidays to you, your friends and family and your residents!

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