Take a Deep Breath and Count to 10

You have done it, and you have encouraged your children and friends to do the same. When something goes wrong or appears too difficult, this is a great way to put both personal problems and work-based ones in proper perspective. It is a good way to de-escalate negative feelings and respond in a manner that can be positive while not ignoring the importance of a situation. When a crisis situation happens, it is natural for extreme anger or depression to hit the leader of a group. It is also common for the leader to suppress the feelings initially. This often causes confusion among the members of the team because they are likely angry or depressed about the problem and fear expressing those emotions.

A time-honored method of re-assessing and regulating our responses is to develop a practice of relying on deep breathing exercises—like take a deep breath and count to 10 or take a deep breath in through your nose, let it out slowly through your mouth (about twice as long on the exhale as the inhale). You might try it a few times if once hasn’t put you in the frame of mind you are seeking. Practice this on a continuing basis—even before a crisis hits. It can keep you from grounding your kids for life or responding irrationally when you get cut off in traffic. The more you practice regulating your emotions, the more likely you are to succeed in the practice.

When you learn to regulate your emotions, it becomes a valuable tool to handle situations that have gotten out of control. If, on the other hand, you resort to suppression, team members may be confused because they may be getting the message it is just fine and it is time to move along. Team members become anxious and/or panic. The stress level is elevated, and they “walk on egg shells.” This can easily cause diminished teamwork, and production will likely take a slump.

Therefore, practice regulating your emotions. Recognize the situation. Rather than making reference to something being a problem or even a disaster, look at the situation as a team challenge. The first person on the team to adopt this attitude becomes the team leader, and his/her example will likely be mimicked by the team. Include the team in the solution building. Get input from the team. Avoid words that can indicate shame, anger, blame, or disaster. Focus on accepting the challenge, and brainstorm for input to identify and set the challenge in motion. Utilize the time-honored process for problem-solving. 1) Identify the problem; 2) Look at various solutions; 3) choose the best; put it in place; 4) Set a time for evaluation; 5) If it is working, keep moving forward, but if not, go back to #2 and move in a different direction. Good leadership and acceptance of this method (with team involvement) will likely inspire team members to move forward and accomplish the challenge within the time perimeter you have set.

If you need help learning to regulate your emotions, your Employee Assistance program is here to help. Please contact Arbor Family Counseling (402) 330-0960 or Arborfamilycounseling.com. One of our counselors will be glad to help you develop a strategy and become the strong team member or leader you want to be. Emotional regulation will be an asset for your future.
Keep Your Cool by Playing it Cool—for Your Family

For one reason or another, holidays seem to resurface every year at the same time. With the onset, it is easy to suddenly feel the pressure of what is ahead. Relax—don’t put yourself into the whirlwind of having to do everything you have been doing while adding the additional anxieties of making everything perfect while you become exhausted. Consider some of the following suggestions to de-clutter your mind and move positively toward an enjoyable celebration. No matter which of the holidays you enjoy the most, think about the whole picture. There is a big combination of special things going on in the coming months. With pencil and paper in hand—make a list of what you anticipate to be your focus. Is it Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hanukah, Christmas, Kwanza, New Year’s or the Sports Championships? Look at your first choice, and add others as appropriate—then tackle the following ideas.

1. Get the family involved to the degree it is possible. Regulate trips to and from stores to get decorations, grocery items, and gifts. Make a plan and set it in stone (at least gravel). You are in control. Don’t relinquish it, but do share the responsibilities.

2. When you are considering decorations—look at the long range. What can you use for multiple events? Consider choosing white lights, long needled greenery, and some gold and silver beads. If your goal is to make Halloween the highlight, have a jack-o-lantern and add some little gourds to the decorations. Once Halloween is past, the jack-o-lantern can be replaced with a cornucopia filled with fruits and vegetables. When Thanksgiving is in the past, you can remove the fruits and vegetables and replace them with some shiny Christmas ornaments. If you are celebrating Hanukah, replace the cornucopia with the menorah. The same would be true for Kwanza—a arrange the candles to be the center of the decorations. New Year’s can display enhanced decorations with an appropriate sign for the following year tucked in with the things you had for one of the other celebrations. Sports parties are easily encapsulated with a few items that show the “team colors” of your favorites—finshed. Minimal work was required, and you accomplished your plan to keep it simple.

3. Now comes the food. It is a good idea to choose a few very special things and focus on them for your offerings. Make a list—stick by it. Avoid having to return to buy more food with the exception of fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, or other items that could spoil. Identify the oils, spices, and trimmings you might need. Check your pantry so you will not duplicate that which is already there in abundance. Look at what you are planning to cook. If at all possible cook several meals in one session—such planning can save a lot of time. When the food has been prepared, let it cool, and make pre-cooked packages and label them for your freezer. When the next holiday comes around, take the pre-cooked items out, and defrost. Reheat the meats and vegetables in the oven or microwave, and let those not needing to be reheated defrost either in the refrigerator or at room temperature depending on the item.

4. Consider shopping for gifts a maximum number of times in the days prior to the event. Determine what you are going to get and where you will be getting it. If other members of the family have to shop—perhaps you can enlist them to pick up some things you need. Above all, stick to your guns and don’t give in to the temptation to buy, buy, buy. Wrap those gifts as soon as you get home if at all possible. This way, you will avoid the last minute panic.

FINALLY—remember, the holidays are a time to enjoy yourself with family and friends. Make this your priority. If you feel over-taxed, make party visits and “lunch out” plans short and sweet. When you are reviewing the year, you will find you have enjoyed yourself immensely.

6. LAST—BUT NOT LEAST—make a plan for time, what you will be able to accomplish, and your budget, and stick to it. You will enjoy the outcome for a much longer time by following through!!!!.