



Photo by Paul Lancione

(L-R) Geli Bloomquist and Helen Watt listen intently as they jot down useful tips for making the holidays hassle-free during the "Managing Holiday Stress" seminar at Big Vanilla Athletic Club on November 15.

Seminar Focuses On Holiday Stress Relief

By Conal Darcy

On November 15th, the Big Vanilla Athletic Club hosted an hour-long seminar on "Managing Holiday Stress," which was led by Suzette Langley, proprietor of Passion for Life Coaching.

According to Langley, the main source of holiday tension comes from seasonal obligations. "Some of the stress I have comes from doing extra things," she says. Tasks like writing Christmas cards, baking, and visiting family can compound stress, especially when left to the last minute.

Prior planning is the remedy to these seemingly overwhelming demands. Langley says you need to enter the season with "a vision of your ideal holiday." Identifying a general goal will give you a direction in which you can start plotting objectives. "After that," says Langley, "the planning part is easy."

The first step is developing a schedule that allows you enough time to complete your goals. "A lot of people make the mistake of not making time for the little things – shopping, going to parties, baking, and such," says Langley. "The key is to be realistic and know your limitations."

Langley suggested taking a day off work. "A lot of people have unused vacation time at the end of the year," she says. "Using this time allows you to shop when stores are less crowded, spend a day baking, or just relax and take some time for yourself."

Another trick is to simplify your role and enlist the help of others. Langley described how, after driving 14 hours one

year to visit family, a number of her relatives expected her to travel an extra hour out of her way to see them. Instead, she sent them all a note suggesting they come meet her at a central house during her trip. "It's ok to have people come to you – especially if you're doing a lot of traveling," she says.

Money is another top stressor, according to Langley. "A lot of people get into the Christmas season and fail to plan for the [financial] part of things. They come up short on money, they can't get what they want, or they get to January and their credit card bill is much bigger than they wanted it to be."

Langley recommends deciding early on who you are giving gifts to and exactly how much you will spend. Make a budget and keep track of expenses, including easy-to-overlook items like food, clothing, wrapping paper, decorations, etc. You need to keep track of holiday spending to take control of it.

Guest speaker Joy Cortina, an independent consultant for Arbonne International, offered some tips on how to avoid shopping crowds. She suggested buying off the internet or out of catalogs, or even hiring a gift-buying consultant to help plan your presents and save some money.

Langley ended with some sage advice. With all this planning and forethought, it is easy to become caught up in the next event on the agenda. Sit back and enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells you only experience during this season. Remember, the holidays are a time of rest and good will, so relax and enjoy it.