



A LESSON FROM LIONS – SUCCESSFUL PACK-HUNTING BEHAVIOUR



Lions are at the very top of the predator chain - the most successful hunters there are in the wild. How did they achieve this top-ranking position? How do they successfully hunt animals many times bigger and stronger than themselves?

Remember that hunting and killing prey is crucial for the survival of every pride of lions, being the only means of obtaining their essential food. It is also therefore vital that lions' hunting strategies and actions are effective and produce the results they need, or they will all starve and die.

Scientists have researched the social and hunting behaviour of lions, and recorded their strategies, methods and techniques. Incidentally, when we refer to 'lions' here, we're including both males and females – lions and lionesses.

KNOWING YOUR ROLE

Every lion in a hunting pack plays its role in a co-ordinated set of actions that together form the overall hunting strategy. Every individual lion **knows exactly what its role is, what it needs to do and when**. Lions don't wait for the memo telling them what to do! This sounds like stating the obvious, but it is a clear truth that needs to be understood.

Acting in unison in the hunt, every individual lion also knows that it needs to be **totally reliable** in carrying out its role. The success of the hunt and the safety of other lions absolutely depend on this. Any lapse of concentration, or failure by any one lion to carry out its role, would compromise the hunt and put others in danger of injury.

KNOWING HOW TO CO-ORDINATE ACTIVITIES

Another factor is that instinctively each individual lion **knows how to co-ordinate** its own activities with those around it, and how to interact with the rest of the pride effectively during the course of the hunt.

TOTAL TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

Finally, each lion must have **total trust and confidence** in every other lion in the hunting pack, otherwise there would be hesitation and doubt, leading to mistakes, lack of confident action when it's needed, and ultimately a failed hunt. The concept of trust and confidence is a 'sense of knowing' that each animal possesses.

PLANNING AND STRATEGIZING

But how do they all know exactly what to do and how to go about it together? Lions don't sit in a meeting, plan the hunt strategy and allocate tasks, or wait for a memo, do they? How it works is by learned behaviour patterns stemming from past experience and the building up of knowledge, skills and confidence through shared successful results. It becomes, in effect, 'automatic' through repeated shared action. This is how the hunting pack works perfectly together, like a well-oiled machine doing what it was designed to do, and needing no outside instructions or direction to achieve the group's objectives.

This is also exactly how a perfectly functioning team of people work together to achieve the team's objectives in the business and commercial world.

SUPERBLY FUNCTIONING TEAMWORK – LEARNED INSTINCTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Just like the hunting-pack of lions, when the task is well known to all, when it's been done before, when everyone knows precisely what their role is, when everyone is reliable and has trust and confidence in all the other team members, and when everyone works in co-ordinated harmony, this is when a team of people performs at its peak efficiency and succeeds every time in achieving its objectives. Let's unpack that.

WHAT ARE THE LESSONS?

1. Everyone must know exactly what the task is and how it is to be achieved – this is 'The Plan'.

2. The plan must have a measurable result.
3. Everyone must know exactly what their role is in the plan and what is expected of them.
4. Every member of the team must be totally reliable in carrying out their role.
5. Everyone must know how their role interacts with the roles of other team members.
6. Everyone in the team must have total trust and confidence in every other team member, and the certainty that each will each carry out their role reliably.
7. Everyone works together in co-ordinated harmony to implement the plan and achieve the objective.
8. When 1-6 work properly, the objective is achieved, the 'buffalo' is hunted and killed, and everyone eats well!

This is how teamwork becomes almost instinctive and automatic. Teams that function like this need very little - or no direction or instruction, except when facing new objectives that need new strategizing and planning.

This is also the most efficient way a team can operate, and the fastest way to achieve objectives. And, what's more, it is personally satisfying to each team member - feeling good about our ability to perform and to be considered totally reliable by everyone else. It is also a very good feeling to know that we can utterly rely on our fellow team members to perform their roles reliably too. The reliability of every team member helps breed respect for all from all, and converts actions into results, or returns. So there we have it: our core values of Respect, Reliability and Returns, and all from looking at lions.

Our lesson from lions shows us how we can all achieve top performance efficiency working together as a team, and how living our core values will come to us naturally at the same time.

BLUE EMPLOYEE CLIMATE SURVEY

I want to remind you that we consider our employees to be Blue's greatest asset, and it is extremely important that we create a working environment in which we can develop each one of you to become the best you can be. To help achieve this, as I have mentioned in previous communication, Blue is undertaking an enterprise-wide employee climate survey, conducted independently by Deloitte. It is essential that each of us participates and gives our honest views in the survey, which is anonymous, in order for us to kick-start the process of creating a brilliant working environment at Blue.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

In closing, I would like to wish everyone at Blue, together with your loved ones, a joyful and blessed festive season, and a well deserved time of rest. To all fellow Christians, may you have a peaceful and spiritually enriching Christmas. ©

Johan Meiring.



In this issue:

In the News:
Christmas Card Competition



Africa's culinary melting pot



Wellness Corner: Stay well over the holidays





Celebrating our colourful African heritage

2010 Card Competition

This was the first year that Blue has been included in the Mayibuye Annual Children's Card Drawing Competition, and we are proud to recognise the winners here and to share with you their wonderful, colourful, joyful and heart-warming drawings.

We had a very enthusiastic response to the competition, and the children of Blue's staff have shown great imagination, sparkling talent and bright festive spirit in their truly stunning submissions – which certainly lived up to the extremely high standards set in past years.

In fact, they are so brilliant that after choosing the winning entry, the judging panel could not ignore the delightful designs of the three runners up...so much so that the Group have chosen to print and publish all four designs as our year-end greeting cards.

The winner, and runners up are:

- Winner: Boago Mogotsi (9 years old), from Gaborone, Botswana
- Runner up: Morné van Zyl (11 years old), from Pretoria, South Africa
- Runner up: Kgotso Liphapang (12 years old), from Phuthaditjhaba, South Africa
- Runner up: Nico Venter (11 years old), from Windhoek, Namibia

The Group would like to send out a big "Thank you" to all the children who took part, because of the reminder all these drawings gave us of the joy of the festive season. We can feel the warmth and joy of the festive season spreading out from all children everywhere.

Winner



Boasgo Mogotsi is 9 years old and is the daughter of Tshidie Mogotsi who works for Blue in Gaborone, Botswana. She is the talented young artist who created this picture of Christmas in Botswana.

Runner Up



Morné van Zyl is 11 years old and is the son of Alice van Zyl who works for Blue in Pretoria, South Africa. He is the talented young artist who created the picture of Father Christmas on his roller-skates.

Runner Up



Kgotso Liphapang is 12 years old and is the son of Matumelo Liphapang who works for Blue in Phuthaditjhaba, South Africa. He is the talented young artist who created the picture of the Christmas tree.

Runner Up



Nico Venter is 14 years old and is the son of Susan Venter who works for Blue in Windhoek, Namibia. He is the talented young artist who created the picture of this beautiful Christmas tree.

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful, uplifting and refreshing festive season.

Africa's *culinary* melting pot

Africa is a melting pot of various nationalities, ethnic heritages, languages and cultures. This is apparent when you examine the human capital at Blue, where we employ a diverse range of people: across 13 countries, 20 nationalities, 155 dialects, operating under one company culture.

In order to celebrate the diversity of the organisation, we ran a poll for the Blue Bulletin on what people traditionally ate across the continent over the festive season. We thought it would be interesting to see what culinary diversity, or similarities, we have as the Blue family across Africa.

What became clear from the results was that African cuisine reflects indigenous traditions, as well as influences from Europe and Asia. As we have said, Africa is home to hundreds of tribes, ethnic and social groups, and this diversity is also reflected in African cuisine, in the use of basic ingredients as well as in the style of preparation and cooking techniques.

Traditionally, as in almost all cultures, the food of Africa uses a combination of locally available fruits, cereal grains and starches, vegetables and meat products. On the whole, African meals comprise of far more vegetables compared to meat, and are eaten most of the time with cooked soup or some form of gravy. However, we should not think of African food as all being the same. The cuisine differs across the continent, according to the influences, and each country and group has its own distinctive foods, as we can see below:

Origin: Afrikaans

Food: Most Afrikaners sit down to a Christmas luncheon of either roast lamb or pork, or cooked tongue. As per tradition, this will be served with pumpkin fritters and potbrood (bread baked in a pot, usually over an open fire). Dessert will be in the form of a trifle, fruitcake or brandy pudding.

Origin: Basotho (Lesotho)

Food: This time of the year when the people of Lesotho prepare delicious traditional food. There will be smoke bellowing from the three-legged pots on the fires, where the Basotho will prepare food like Nyekoe (a mix of beans and sorghum), stew, sebotsoa-botsoane (braaied pumpkin), lipabi (fried maize crushed to powder, mixed with sugar and salt and served as a dessert), papa (pap - traditional porridge made from ground maize or other grain), tripe, braaied (barbequed) beef, steamed bread, motoho (drinkable pap), and peaches, with plenty of ginger beer to wash it all down. Children will be given dried pumpkin seeds as snacks.

Origin: Batswana (Botswana)

Food: In Botswana over the holidays many families will settle down at the table for a standard meat and starch meal – such as pap and braai meat, chicken and rice or tiroyaone (dumplings with goat meat). Offal also features heavily in the Batswana cuisine, with favourites being serobe (a heavily spiced boiled mixture of offal) and mogodu (tripe). The traditional dish seswaa (pounded meat) will also be abundant. Morogo (wild spinach), bogobe (stiff cornmeal porridge) and fatcakes

as the habitual accompaniments, with ginger beer to drink.

Origin: British

Food: In the UK, the big celebratory lunch is on Christmas Day, unlike many other Europeans who tend to have their large family lunch on Christmas Eve. A British Christmas lunch traditionally consisted of a roast goose, but most families now opt for a large turkey with stuffing (made from pork sausage meat, bread crumbs, onions, herbs and spices). Brussels sprouts are also synonymous with a British Christmas. This is usually followed by a Christmas pudding (a steamed pudding, heavy with dried fruit and nuts) flambéed with brandy, and mince pies, both served with brandy butter.

Origin: Changanes (South Africa)

Food: In the lead up to Christmas, Changanes look forward to eating mopane worms (large edible caterpillar), dihobe (samp - dried corn kernels that have been stamped and chopped until broken), tshopi (pumpkin made with roots of morogo (wild spinach), xiendla xi hi vomu (mixed peanuts and corn) and guxe (spinach) on Christmas day.

Origin: German

Food: The Germans celebrate the holidays by having a large family dinner on Christmas Eve. Once the Weihnachtsmann (Father Christmas) arrives in the late afternoon and placed presents under the tannenbaum (Christmas Tree) they will sing traditional Christmas songs and sit down to a meal of fish (usually herring) or goose stuffed with apples or prunes, and red cabbage. The main Christmas drink is gluehwein (mulled wine). Dessert usually consists of kirschkompott (a delicious cherry sauce that can be poured over ice cream). Throughout the festivities they will eat traditional German baked goods such as lebkuchen (resembles soft gingerbread), zimtsterne (cinnamon cookies), pfeffernuesse (small, hard, round biscuits with ground nuts), mandelspekulatis (almond cookies), spritzgebaeck (cookie made with eggs, butter, sugar and flour), and vanillekipferl (crescent shaped biscuits, made with ground almonds or hazelnuts, and flavored with vanilla). Their traditional Christmas cake is stolen (a sweet yeast bread is packed with raisins, currants, citrus and cherries, with a marzipan strip baked inside).

Origin: Greek

Food: Christmas for our Greek colleagues will consist of a braai/barbeque that is called souvlaki. The meat is cooked on skewers and is served with salads, breads, potatoes, a pasta dish called pasticho, dolmades (rice and mince wrapped in vine leaves), and plenty of sauces called tarama (made from the salted and cured roe of either cod or carp) and tzatsiki (made with yogurt, cucumber, mint, lemon juice and garlic). All this will be rounded off with a range of homemade desserts.

Origin: Indian

Food: Indian Christian households began their festivities a month before Christmas. Houses are painted anew, interiors get a facelift, and new clothes are bought for every member of the family. Cakes and cookies are

baked and in addition, to lend an Indian touch, they make rava laddoos (a delectable Indian dessert made with semolina), besan laddoos (a gram flour sweet), chowchow (a relish made from a combination of different vegetables), nippattu (savoury cookies, flat and circular in shape, popular in South India), kodabale (crispy and spicy rings prepared using rice), naankatai (butter cookies, sprinkled with cardamom powder), rose cookies, coconut or chocolate burfi (a sweet made with made from condensed milk, cooked with sugar until it solidifies, then flavoured), chocolate fudge, kajjaya (a sweet dish prepared using rice and unrefined sugar), karjikai (resemble samosas but taste wise, they are sweet and are usually stuffed with coconut and cardamom), doughnuts, and many more such savouries and sweets. The Christmas lunch is usually a mutton biriyani (rice dish) with chicken kebabs.

Origin: Kenyan

Food: In Kenya, what is traditionally eaten on Christmas day is roasted chicken and goat, pilau (a mixture of spiced rice and meat), chapati (a flatbread made from wheat flour), and mokimo (a mashed potato dish with beans, maize and pumpkin leaves incorporated).

Origin: Malawian

Food: In Malawi, they don't have a specific traditional dish for Christmas but what is normally eaten, with rice, is either chicken or chambo fish (found in the Nkhata bay district, in the northern region). Malawians also enjoy mbalagha (cooked green bananas, mixed with either beef or chicken).

Origin: Nigerian

Food: In Nigerian food, the yam features prominently in the local cuisine, and this is no different at celebratory meals when it is prepared in different ways – pounded (fufu), yam flour, water yam porridge or boiled. The most commonly eaten proteins are chicken, goat and fish, but the more unusual bush meat (such as grass cutter) and snails are also enjoyed. Popular soups are also served including afang (a type of greens usually gathered from the forest), bean, melon and vegetable. Ewedu/corchorus (vegetable with a somewhat "slimy" texture, similar to okra, when cooked) is also much enjoyed.

Origin: Pedi (South Africa)

Food: A Pedi Christmas meal will include two kinds of porridge: ting (sour porridge made of fermented mealie meal) and kgodu (made of pumpkin). A stew called lewa will also be prepared with corn, maize, beans, njogo beans and mung beans, and served with masohlo (a dish prepared using marula kernels and dehydrated corn, beans and mung beans) and dinkgwa (dumplings). An intoxicating beverage prepared from malted corn or millet, called bojwala, will also be enjoyed.

Origin: Portuguese

Food: Generally for Christmas Eve lunch Canja de galinha (chicken noodle soup) is eaten. Then it is traditional to have a midnight supper when bacalhau (salted cod fish) is prepared with cabbage, chick peas, potatoes & Portuguese wine or Madeira Wine. On the

25th December, families will gather to have a lunch together with traditional dishes such as carne de vinho e alhos (pork with wine, vinegar and garlic), chicken espatada, and more bacalhau (salted cod fish). On the Islands they would have made a pot roast known as carne assada or carne de alcatra. For dessert there is usually bolo de mel (honey cake), rabanadas (fried toast), pastéis de coco (coconut-custard tarts), lavadores (commonly known washboard cookies), broas de mel (honey cookies) and many more.

Origin: Swazi

Food: Swazis go all-out at Christmas time, preparing a variety of traditional porridge dishes. These include sishwala (thick porridge normally served with meat or vegetables), siphuphe setimdlubu (thick porridge made of mashed groundnuts), sidvudvu (porridge made of pumpkin mixed with mealie meal) and siphuphe semabhontjisi (thick porridge made of mashed beans). Dished cooked with sour milk also make an appearance, such as emasi etinkhobe tembila (ground mealies with sour milk) and emasi emabele (ground sorghum mixed with sour milk). Swazis enjoy dried meats, both cooked (umkhunsu) and uncooked (umncweba). Traditionally vegetable dishes are also served, like tinkhobe (boiled whole maize) and umbidvo wetintsanga (cooked pumpkin tops mixed with groundnuts). All of these dishes are enjoyed with the traditional Swazi beer, called umcombotsi.

Origin: Tswana (South Africa)

Food: At Christmas time a goat or a sheep will be slaughtered, and eaten with tripe and pap (traditional porridge made from ground maize or other grain).

Origin: Venda (South Africa)

Food: A Venda Christmas meal consists of vhuswa (porridge), mukusule (wild spinach) and dhovi (mopani worms served with ground peanuts).

Origin: Xhosa (South Africa)

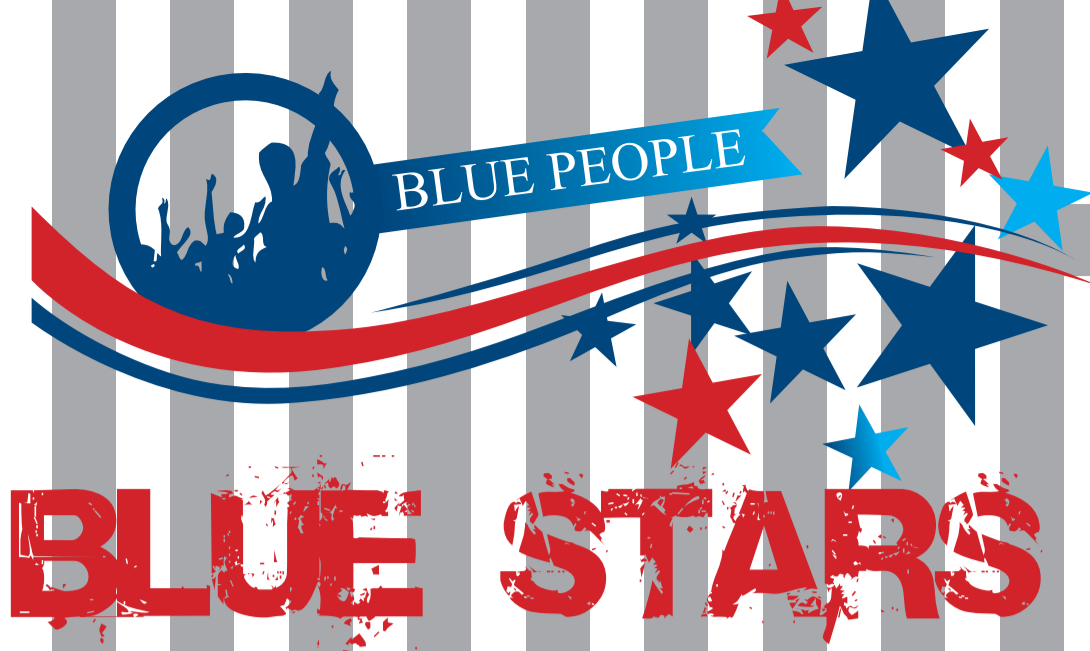
Food: Xhosa families will gather around this Christmas time and enjoye udampulenisi (dumplings), umfino (cooked spinach and cabbage mixed with some mealie meal), isitya (stew), umngqusho (samp, beans and spices), with the main drink of choice being umqombuthu (African beer)

Origin: Zambian

Food: The typical Zambian dish is nshima (a thick cornmeal porridge cooked in various ways across the country) served with two side dishes, known as "relishes". This traditional dish is still the favourite at Christmas for many Zambians. At Christmas it will be served with boiled chicken, goat and/or beef. Some Zambians will elect to celebrate Christmas with the culinary dishes from Europe, but nshima remains the favourite.

Origin: Zulu (South Africa)

Food: The Christmas fare for Zulus at this time of year is plentiful with a stew being served made with lamb and kidney beans, known as isitshulu. This is eaten with uphutu (maize meal porridge), isithambu (stamped maize), iklabishi (cabbage), ithanga (pumpkin) and isithelo (fruit). Amasi (soured milk) and tshwala (beer) will also be enjoyed.



Country	Employee	Branch	Stars	Category
Kenya	Catherine Mbaluka	National Office	**	B,T
	Janet Nzilani	Machakos	***	B,T,S
	Maryanne Muchoki	Nyeri	**	B,I
	Samson Nzomo	Machakos	***	B,T,S
	Paul Njery	Machakos	***	B,T,S
	Justin Mwangi	Nyeri	****	B,T,S,I
Namibia	Yvonne Heyn	National Office	***	B,T,I
	Anna Williams	National Office	***	B,T,I
	Beverly Diaries	National Office	****	B,T,S,I
	Suzetta Jafptha	National Office	***	B,T,I
	Liswe Gcilishe	National Office	***	B,T,I
	Susan Mukwata	Katima	**	B,S
	Innosensia Junias	Grootfontein	**	B,S
	Jacqueline Roetz	Walvisbay	****	B,T,S,I
	RSA Branches	Claudine Thiant	Vredenburg	****
Lizel Dreyer		George	***	B,T,I
John Nicol Adams		Vredenburg	***	B,T,I
Courage Rikhotso		Pretoria Sunnyside	**	B,T
RSA Mobile	Anele Zonke	Head Office	*	T
	Belinda Matiwana	Head Office	*	T
	Jeanette Sekhosana	Head Office	*	T
	Yolanda Zondo	Head Office	***	B,T,S
BFS HO	Veruscha Bosch	Collections Call Centre - Resolution	***	B,T,I
	Alta Rossouw	Corporate Communications	***	B,T,P
	Marcio Caldeira	ICT	**	B,P

- Best service - B
- Teamwork - T
- Sales support - S
- Initiative/innovation - I
- Persistence/positivity - P

Other religious and ethnic groups also have key celebrations throughout the year, where food plays a major role. Some of the better-known ones include the following:


Religious Holiday: Diwali (Hindu, Sikh and Jain)
Food: Diwali is a significant 5-day festival in Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism occurring between mid October and mid November. It is also popularly known as the Festival of Lights and predominantly celebrates the victory of good over evil. On Diwali, there is a custom to exchange sweets to the friends and neighbours that is why Diwali can't even be imagined without sweets and savouries that are specially made at home. The list of Diwali special sweets is exhaustive, and similar to the sweets listed above (Indian). Apart from sweet dishes, there are several other delicacies that are made on the occasion of Diwali, dahi-bhalle (lentil dump lings in yogurt sauce) and ghathiya (savoury gram flour wafers) are the two most popular of them.

Religious Holiday: Eid ul-Fitr (Muslim)
Food: Eid ul-Fitr, often abbreviated to Eid, is a Muslim holiday that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting. Eid is an Arabic word meaning "festivity", while Fitr means "to break fast"; and so the holiday symbolizes the breaking of the


fasting period. In general it is looked upon as a day of family, rather than public celebration. The day always starts with special Eid prayers at the main mosque, followed later in the day by a large celebratory lunch at the house of the senior member of the family. On Eid el-Fitr itself, the family lunch will usually consist of biryani (a mixed rice dish of meat and spices), sago dishes, sambouseh (stuffed, sweet pastries), and other sweetmeats.

Religious Holiday: Hanukkah (Jewish)
Food: Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights, is an eight-day Jewish holiday commemorating the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt of the 2nd century BC. There is a custom of eating foods fried or baked in oil. Accordingly, latkes (potato pancakes) are traditionally associated with Hanukkah, as they are prepared by frying in oil. Similarly, many families have the custom of eating pontshkes (jam-filled doughnuts), which are also deep-fried in oil.

A big "thank you" to all those who took part in this poll, and helped enlighten on us on how they will celebrate this holiday season.



WORLD AIDS DAY



Started on 1st December 1988, World AIDS Day is about raising money, increasing awareness, fighting prejudice and improving education.

The World AIDS Day theme for 2010 was 'Universal Access and Human Rights'.

World AIDS Day is important in reminding people that HIV has not gone away, and that there are many things still to be done.

HIV can be prevented, yet millions are infected every year...every month... every week... every day.

An estimated 22.4 million adults and children were living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa at the end of 2008.

During that year, an estimated 1.4 million Africans died from AIDS. Around 14.1 million children have lost one or both parents to the epidemic, and in 2008 an estimated 1.8 million children were living with HIV.

These numbers are still too high.

World AIDS Day is important in reminding people that HIV has not gone away, and that there are many things still to be done. To commemorate the day, Blue asked you to get your creative hats on, and ran a poetry competition. The entries were poignant, emotional, and very well written...however

we finally narrowed it down to 2 runners-up and one winner.

The runners-up were Madelein Adams and Dashni Govender, but the overall winner was Tseko Tsitsi from the Kroonstad Cross Street branch.


Read Tseko's inspirational poem for Africa below. Well done, Tseko!

*From the day he was born,
Life was bright for him,
Enough money to send him to school,
Enough money to send him to university.*

*Handsome son of Africa,
Gold, silver and diamonds were yours,
But beauties of the land led you astray,
Until you were told,
HIV/Aids will shorten your day.*

*Nations fall apart without you.
Who will teach our children?
Who will build roads, hospitals and schools?
Who will resolve the conflicts among Africans?
Your wisdom will be needed.*

*May God comfort the nation,
HIV/Aids will never defeat us.
We will stand together,
To fight this pandemic,
May God strengthen us.*



This Festive Season

STAY WELL OVER THE HOLIDAYS

At this time of year there are more vehicles than ever on the highways and roads... We must all go shopping for gifts, decorations, food and lots of other holiday essentials... We have parties to go to and families to visit. It is fun and it is exhausting. We all want to have a great holiday but the most important thing is to have a safe holiday. Here are tips to help keep you safe and well:

Out and About

- If you are traveling, take time to plan your trip. If you are driving yourself make sure you have a map or GPS and find out ahead of time if there are any detours or road closures. Try to only make stops in lighted areas with other people around. Avoid driving alone or at night.
- If you are the driver, be fit for the journey by making sure you are well rested before you leave and allow plenty of time for breaks on the way
- If you are going to undertake a long journey, be sure to check your car's oil and water levels, and tyre pressure before setting off.
- Keep all car doors locked and windows closed while in or out of your car. Set your alarm or use an anti-theft device when you have parked.
- Never leave your car unoccupied with the motor running or with children inside.
- If you are shopping at a mall be very aware that mall and shopping centre parking lots are prime targets for robberies. Try to shop during the daylight hours and park close to the stores. Lock all doors and place your packages in the boot of your car.
- To avoid car theft, when returning to your car keep your eyes on the scene around you and notice people that are just hanging around, avoid them. Have your keys in your hand and check inside the car before getting in. Lock the door as soon as you are in the car. The same principles apply when arriving home.
- Be very alert when you go to an ATM. Visit ATM's only at well lighted and populated locations. Try going only in the daylight hours if possible. If something makes you nervous or doesn't seem right - LEAVE!

At Home

The holiday season is a time when busy people can become careless and vulnerable to theft and other holiday crime. Don't let the rush and excitement of the holiday season make you careless in protecting your home from potential criminals.

- Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave the house, even for a few minutes.
- When leaving home for an extended time, have a neighbour or family member watch your house and pick up any newspapers and mail.
- Indoor and outdoor lights should be on an automatic timer.
- Leave a radio or television on so the house looks and

sounds occupied.

- Large displays of holiday gifts should not be visible through the windows and doors of your home.
- Criminals take advantage of the holiday season to prey on those who are unsuspecting and generous. Be careful when someone you do not know comes to your door during the holiday season.

Celebrating

The festive season brings fun and frivolity. But, if you are like most people, they also bring stress. Holiday drinking abuse is a common way of dealing with the pressure, often by accident. Booze is flowing freely at parties and gatherings, and what harm could it do have a couple, just to take the edge off? And then a couple more get consumed. Here are a few tips to keep your drinking under control over the holidays:

- If you are going to a party, decide ahead of time how many drinks you will have. Just make sure you stick to it. Don't drink them all at once...Pace yourself. About one drink an hour is generally okay for most people who don't have a history of drinking.
- Have one glass of water for each alcoholic drink you consume. Sometimes we drink because we want something in our hands during a party. This way, you still do, but you don't end up overdoing it on alcohol.
- Make sure you have something to eat also helps. It is never a good idea to drink on an empty stomach.
- There is no excuse for driving drunk. Plan ahead – before going out always have a plan as to how you will get home should the situation get out of hand and you may not be in a position to drive. Either agree upfront with a friend that he/she will be the designated driver, or club together with your friends to hire a car or mini-bus with a driver; keep the number of a cab company on your cellphone; and ensure that you have enough money set aside in your purse/wallet for this.

Spiking

Drink spiking is also on the increase and more and more cases are being reported, and not only with female victims. Drink spiking is usually when a drug or additional alcohol is added to a beverage without the knowledge of the beverage consumer. This will alter their behaviour and make them very susceptible to abuse. The drugs usually have no taste; odour; or colour, so will go unnoticed. As this phenomenon is on the increase, the following advice will help to prevent you becoming the next victim of drink spiking:

- Buy your own drinks
- Never leave your drink unattended
- Always keep your drink in your hand
- Do not accept drinks from someone that you do not know
- Make sure the drink is opened and poured in front of you

- Keep an eye on your friends' drinks

Budgeting vs. Overspending

Over the festive season, 36% of adults spend more than they can afford. This means that between you and your two best friends, one of you will be breaking your December budget this year.

Overspending is never more evident than during the holidays, when holiday spirit can trip-up even the most careful budgeters, and retailers work especially hard to squeeze every last drop of sales out of customers. But, you can save on your holiday purchases without being a Scrooge. The key is to sit down and create a budget, and stick to it! See below for more tips:

- Avoiding peak shopping days and hours will give you some time to weigh your choices more carefully and avoid pressure-induced impulse buys. You can also shop and/or research your choices online, so that you can avoid going to the store altogether, or already have an item picked out for you when you get there.
- There's nothing wrong with buying several things at the same store, but if you're trying to curb unnecessary spending, it's important to remain aware of what you are buying and how much it will cost. If you have a budget to stick to (and you should), don't walk aimlessly into a large store with a shopping bag to fill - it's a recipe for budgetary disaster! If you do end up with several items, sort through them and add up your total bill before you get to the cash register. That way, if the goods add up to way more than you intended or are willing to spend, you'll have time to decide whether you should put something back.
- Retailers generally put the most work behind selling items that yield higher returns. That's not to say that you shouldn't buy these items, but just be aware that if you do, you are probably paying a premium. If you're shopping for savings, try checking the store's sales items first. In other words, start your shopping at the back of the store and work your way to the front. You may find something similar to the higher priced goods that caught your eye at the front of the store for a lower price.
- There are always items you're going to need every year, such as cards and wrapping paper. Plan ahead and shop for these items well before the holiday shopping season begins and you are rushing to pull your shopping list together. Better yet, buy these items at deep discounts in January and save them for the next year.

Compiled using information from:

<http://www.investopedia.com/articles/pf/07/overspending.asp>
http://www.ehow.com/how_5570616_stay-safe-over-holidays.html
<http://ezinearticles.com/?How-to-Avoid-Holiday-Drinking-Abuse-and-Stay-Safe-This-Christmas&id=3238120>
http://crime.about.com/od/prevent/a/safe_holiday.htm