



By Jonathan Hoffman, Ph.D.

# BETTING ON THE HOLIDAYS

Have you heard about what they are calling life-style gambling? It's the hottest thing since Texas hold 'em.

The basic idea is to place customized bets on real events from your life or someone else's. It's all made possible by the Internet, with its massive number-crunching ability to calculate odds on almost anything instantaneously. The new law allowing private gaming companies to monitor the minutia of our private lives makes it perfectly legal.

So now it's no problem to lay down a bet, for instance, on how many sick days your co-worker will take in the next six months. Maybe you're a little short on a down payment for a new Lexus? Take a chance on the under-over bet for frugal Aunt Charlotte leaving a 15 percent tip at her next book club luncheon. Let the good times roll!

My favorite, however, is betting on the holidays. There are just so many opportunities for us sporting folk. One of my favorites is office party poker, where you play hands of worker cliques to see which group sucks up to the boss the most times during the event.

Here's what today's line is for this holiday season's big dinner party at my friend Joey G.'s home on Dec. 20 in Fort Lauderdale:

- His children not complaining about the food: 2-1
- All the guests arriving on time: 5-1
- His wife changing her outfit only once: 3-2
- The good tablecloth remaining stain-free: 10-1
- All the guests appreciating their host and hostess: 3-1
- Everyone being in the holiday spirit: 15-1

One of my relatives from New York is planning a high-end cruise as a surprise for her spouse for the last 10 days of the year. Here are the couple's odds for the event, courtesy of SilverLiningGaming.com:

- Plane arriving in plenty of time to get to Port Everglades: 3-1
- Sitting at a table on the ship with a couple they like: 6-1
- Not having a food-poisoning scare on the ship: 2-1
- Getting along with their spouse for the entire trip: 4-1
- Making an expensive purchase they still like when they get home: 12-1

I think I can win big by betting on the holidays because so many people continue to hold onto the faulty belief that "the holidays are going to be the best ever!" This affects the odds in my favor tremendously. Unfortunately, it also is the reason why so many people get the "holiday blues." They imagine wonderful parties full of cheer, joy and meaningful relationships.

Instead, they get constant stress, endless lines at the mall and post-holiday letdown. Sometimes, as a psychologist, I feel bad about profiting from

people's lack of perspective, but, hey, in the next year or so, some of them will make a killing by buying distressed properties from South Floridians who were over-exuberant about real estate, right?

All that said: Peace on Earth and goodwill to all. But I wouldn't bet on it. ■

*Dr. Jonathan H. Hoffman is a licensed psychologist in Florida and New York who has worked extensively with children and adults experiencing problems in their lives for the last 20 years.*

