



HANDLING THE HOLIDAYS

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Managing Stress and Depression Around the Holidays

- The holidays can bring joy, but it's not uncommon to experience stress, depression and anxiety as well. The season is full of potential stressors. Alongside this, feelings of loneliness and isolation are also common around the holidays. All of these things have the potential to be magnified this year.
- Your emotional health concerns don't disappear just because it's the holidays.
- While you may often feel pressure to keep spirits up and a smile on your face during the holidays — pressure that can worsen feelings of loneliness and depression — it's okay to experience a range of emotions during the season.



Keep Your Healthy Habits

Maintaining healthy habits during the holiday season will be one of your best defenses against stress.

- Maintaining what you can of your daily routine
- Getting enough sleep
- Eating well
- Staying physically active
- Keeping up personal self-care time

Fit holiday obligations into your everyday routine rather than letting them upset your life.



Make Small Adjustments

The holiday season can seem full of big changes, so focus on little things that can help you relax.

- Take a Break from Technology
- Listen to your Favorite Music
- Take a Walk
- Look for Laughter
- Reach Out to Your Support System
- Turn Inward – Practice RAIN

Lower Expectations

- The holidays can be long and full of commitments. Make a list of what you expect from yourself, what others expect from you and your responsibilities for the holidays. Get comfortable with the idea that you don't have to do everything, and everything doesn't have to be perfect.
- Accept that you may get sad or lonely, and that's okay. If you're coping with mental health concerns, they won't go away just because of the holidays. Keep up your emotional health habits and apply when possible to your new set of responsibilities.
- It's okay to do less. The spirit of the season can sometimes lead people to overcommit their time. When you're looking at your calendar or to-do list, be fair to yourself. Decide what's most important to you, or where you most want to go, and allow yourself to say no to other demands on your time.



Accept Imperfection

- Can good be good enough? As we gear up for the holidays, we often set the bar impossibly high for ourselves and then feel upset when our celebrations don't live up to expectations.
- Before you start preparing, acknowledge that things may not go exactly as planned. It's OK if it's not perfect. Imperfection is healthy and normal.

Don't Lose Sight of What Really Counts

The holidays can get hectic. When overwhelmed by the hustle and bustle, ask yourself:

- Where does this fit in the grand scheme of things? If you're frustrated by the long grocery line you're standing in, remember that it is just a long grocery line — nothing more. Don't let it spoil your afternoon.
- Can I use this moment of frustration as an opportunity to reflect? While the cashier rings up the customers ahead of you, take inventory of the good things that have happened today or the things you are grateful for.
- Even if this moment seems stressful, can I find a way to make it pleasant? Connect with someone else in line with a compliment or kind gesture, or notice what's around you with fresh eyes and an open mind.

Set Aside Differences

- As families gather during this season it can be hard to avoid friends and relatives that you don't always agree with.
- Let go of hate, anger, and differences.
- Agree to disagree.



Respond with Compassion

- You can't change how others act during the stresses of the holiday season, but you can change how you respond to situations.
- Listen. Let them communicate their thoughts and hear their concerns.
- Remember that this year has been difficult for everyone, and we each have our own struggles with everything that has happened.
- Keep in mind that the holidays can be hard for many, even without the added stress of COVID.
- Practice Compassion Using RAIN:
 - R - Recognize the pain of the Other who is suffering, What must it be like to that person?
 - A - Allow for whatever comes up to be felt.
 - I - Investigate - How must that feel?
 - N - Nurture by asking: What might they need? How may I offer understanding? Am I listening? Am I respecting? What kindness might I offer?

How to Make Hard Choices Involving Holiday Plans and COVID

- Coping ahead – start making plans now
- Assessing all of the risks
 - Where you're traveling from and to
 - Varying COVID Guidelines
 - Potential at-risk family members
- Manage family expectations... What if my family doesn't understand?
 - How to approach the conversation
 - The goal isn't to have a debate about who is right or wrong but about taking a stance of agreeing to disagree while setting your own personal boundaries.
 - Suggest Alternatives
 - Accepting the Inevitable
 - Some people are going to be unhappy no matter what.
 - All you can do is tell them that you're sorry they're disappointed and that you're disappointed, too.
 - They have to cope with their own emotions.



QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

