



MANAGING HOLIDAY STRESS

SETA'S Wellness & Safety Awareness Newsletter



STRESS, DEPRESSION, AND THE HOLIDAYS

The holiday season often brings stress, anxiety, and depression. And it's no wonder. The holidays often present a dizzying array of demands – cooking meals, shopping, baking, cleaning, and entertaining, to name just a few. And with COVID-19 spreading in our community, you may be feeling additional stress, or you may be worrying about your and your loved ones' health. You may also feel stressed, sad, or anxious because your holiday plans may look different during the COVID-19 pandemic.

But with some practical tips, you can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would.



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TIPS TO PREVENT HOLIDAY STRESS/DEPRESSION

When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.

1. Acknowledge your feelings. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

2. Reach out. If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community support with online support groups. It also may help to talk to a friend or family member about your concerns. Try reaching out with a text, a call or a video chat. Volunteering your time or doing something to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships. For example, consider dropping off a meal and dessert at a friend's home during the holidays.

3. Be realistic. The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children or other relatives can't come to your home, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos. Or meet virtually on a video call. Even though your holiday plans may look different this year, you can find ways to celebrate.



4. Don't abandon healthy habits. Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Try these suggestions:

- Have a healthy snack before holiday meals so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks.
- Eat healthy meals.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Include regular physical activity in your daily routine.
- Try deep-breathing exercises, meditation or yoga.
- Avoid excessive tobacco, alcohol and drug use.
- Be aware of how the information culture can produce undue stress, and adjust the time you spend reading news and social media as you see fit.

*The best way to cheer
yourself up is to try to
cheer somebody else up.
- Mark Twain*

5. Stick to a budget. Before you do your gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Try these alternatives:

- Donate to a charity in someone's name.
- Give homemade gifts.
- Start a family gift exchange.

6. Plan ahead. Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, connecting with friends and other activities. Consider whether you can shop online for any of your items. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for meal prep and cleanup.

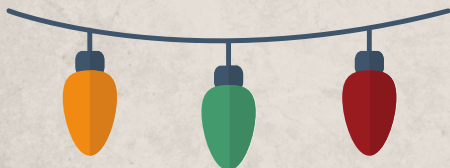
7. Learn to say no. Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity.

8. Take a breather. Make some time for yourself. Find an activity you enjoy. Take a break by yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing, and restoring inner calm. Some options may include:

- Taking a walk at night and stargazing
- Listening to soothing music
- Reading a book

9. Seek professional help if you need it. Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor, a mental health professional, or SETA's EAP.

PRACTICING GRATITUDE FOR HOLIDAY STRESS



Gratitude is a thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible. With gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives. In the process, people usually recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside themselves. As a result, gratitude also helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals – whether to other people, nature, or a higher power.

Gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships.

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When you find yourself stuck in a constant state of worry, or hyper focused on what is not working around you, try to pause for a second and ask yourself one or two of the following questions.

1. What have I gotten to learn recently that has helped me grow?
2. What opportunities do I currently have that I am grateful for?
3. What physical abilities do I have but take for granted?
4. What did I see today or over the last month that was beautiful?
5. Who is a person that I don't speak to often, but, if I lost them tomorrow, it would be devastating? (Take this as a cue to reach out today!)
6. What am I better at today than I was a year ago?
7. What has someone done for me recently that I am grateful for?

By taking time to write down our answers, we consciously redirect our attention to that which we are grateful for. It's also a great way to look back and realize what we may have thought of as insignificant was actually the things that brought us joy.

REFERENCES:

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Happy Holidays!