Holiday Stress, Mental Health & How to Cope

MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

The Holidays: Stress, Mental Health, and How to Cope

The holidays can bring stress from gift preparation, family dynamics, weather changes, and unrealistic expectations (like perfect decorations or gifts), which can worsen or trigger mental health issues like depression, anxiety, PTSD, and eating disorders. However, coping strategies or professional help can ease this stress. Managing expectations and prioritizing realistic goals- rather than perfection, can make the season more manageable.

Holiday Expectation Coping Strategies:

- Set a realistic budget and stick to it. Holiday pressure can tempt overspending, so be generous but know your limits.
- Plan when and where to shop. Choose less crowded times or shop online to reduce stress.
- Take care of yourself. You can't do it all or please everyone. If overwhelmed, step back and decide what things you can let go of.

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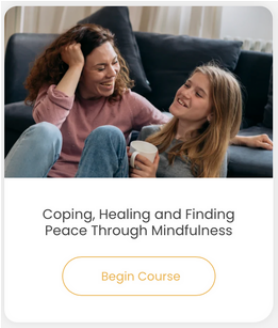
Another common mental issue around the holidays is seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which is a type of depression that often occurs in winter when days are shorter and darker, making the holidays harder. If you or your child are struggling, you're not alone. Here are some coping mechanisms that you can try together:

- Stay hydrated with water and lotion to nourish your brain and boost mood
- Exercise regularly; choose activities you enjoy. Moving your body will release endorphins, which helps lessen the symptoms of depression. If you live in a cold or snowy area, sledding, skiing, or skating can be fun family activities.
- Pamper yourself or your child with warm baths, favorite activities, or treats to lift spirits.
- Spend time with loved ones and encourage your children to connect with others to reduce holiday loneliness

Sometimes coping alone isn't enough and professional help might be needed. Consider reaching out if you or your child:

- Feel constantly irritable or sad
- Struggle to concentrate
- Experience major appetite or sleep changes
- Feel persistent sadness
- Feel unable to cope with feelings of hopelessness.
- Have thoughts of self-harm

The holidays can be full of so many emotions. Staying in touch with how you are feeling is the most important way to ensure that you can reduce stress and take care of yourself.



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