



Clinical Guidance Mental Health and the Holidays

Managing mental health during the holidays can be a complex and challenging issue for many people. While the holiday season is often associated with joy, celebration, and time spent with loved ones, it can also bring about stress, feelings of loneliness, and heightened emotions. Here are some common factors that may impact mental wellbeing during the holidays and strategies to cope:

- ▶ **Family dynamics:** Spending time with family can be both rewarding and challenging. Family gatherings may trigger stress or unresolved issues. It's essential to set realistic expectations, communicate openly, and establish boundaries when needed.
- ▶ **Loneliness:** For some, the holidays can intensify feelings of loneliness, especially for those separated from family or dealing with loss. Connecting with friends, volunteering, or participating in community events can help alleviate loneliness.

- ▶ **Financial stress:** The pressure to buy gifts and participate in holiday activities can strain finances. Creating a budget, focusing on meaningful experiences rather than material gifts, and exploring cost-effective activities can help manage financial stress.
- ▶ **Unrealistic expectations:** The holiday season often comes with societal expectations of perfection and joy. It's essential to recognize that not every moment will be picture-perfect. Setting realistic expectations and accepting imperfections can reduce stress.
- ▶ **Grief and loss:** For those who have experienced the loss of a loved one, the holidays can be particularly challenging. It's okay to grieve, and seeking support from friends, family, or a mental health professional can be crucial during this time.

▶ **Self-care:** Taking care of your mental and physical wellbeing is important, especially during the busy holiday season. Prioritize self-care activities such as exercise, relaxation, and sufficient sleep to help manage stress.

▶ **Social pressures:** Comparing your holiday experience to others' on social media can contribute to feelings of inadequacy. Remember that people often share the highlights, not the challenges. Focus on your own unique celebrations and traditions.

▶ **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD):** Some individuals may experience a form of depression known as Seasonal Affective Disorder during the winter months. Exposure to natural light, regular exercise, and maintaining a consistent sleep schedule can help alleviate symptoms.

If you find that your mental health is significantly impacted during the holidays, it's important to reach out for support. This can include talking to friends or family or seeking guidance from a mental health professional. Remember that it's okay to prioritize your wellbeing and take steps to ensure a healthy and fulfilling holiday season.

Have a health question? Ask us. It's easy!



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