

Mental Health During the Holidays

Holiday rituals and celebrations with loved ones can contribute to [positive wellbeing](#). At the same time, the holiday season can be very difficult. Many people experience stress related to travel, social events, financial worries, feelings of loneliness or grief, and expectations to appear joyful. 64% of people with [mental illness](#) report that their condition worsens during the holidays. Studies have found higher [alcohol consumption](#) during the holidays and higher [suicide](#) rates on [New Year's Day](#).

Tips for supporting mental wellbeing during the holidays:

1. **Acknowledge your feelings.** Give yourself permission to feel your feelings. Painful emotions are valid and trying to ignore them rarely helps. Talk to a friend, write in a journal, schedule a session with a therapist, scream or cry into your pillow... then do something that you enjoy. And remember you are not alone. Many people find the holidays challenging.
2. **Manage your expectations.** Catch yourself if you start thinking about how the holidays “should” be or what you “should” have accomplished this year. Ask yourself where these expectations come from and if they are realistic.
3. **Connect.** Spend time with loved ones and talk to those you can't see in person. Invite someone who doesn't have family in the area to join your celebration. If you are alone, you can think of it as an opportunity to connect with yourself—returning to hobbies you haven't had time to do, learning or trying something new, or planning for the year ahead.
4. **Strategize around difficult relationships.** Plan ahead if you will be spending time with family members who push your buttons. Decide ahead of time how long you will stay at a gathering. Know your boundaries and recognize the signals in your body when you are stressed. Change the subject or pause a conversation if you need to. Refocus on topics you have in common or suggest a fun activity instead. Plan a signal to let a trusted person know when you need a break.
5. **Practice self-care.** Make time for exercise, rest, and relaxation. Spend time outdoors. Reflect on good things that happened in the past year.