

Managing the Holiday Season

in Emotional & Physical Health



The holiday season often brings on feelings of stress, depression and feelings of being overwhelmed. People are often spread thin with holiday demands—parties, shopping, baking, cleaning, entertaining, house guests, and financial concerns, just to name a few.

Common stress reactions could include:

- Headaches
- Increased Irritability
- Overeating/Overdrinking
- Trouble Sleeping
- Digestive Disorder Flare-ups
- Anxiety
- Hopelessness
- Sadness

What can you do if someone you know is struggling with the “holiday blues”?

- Try to involve that person in activities, but don’t be forceful.
- Be a good listener. Never challenge or deny their feelings. If they express depressive thoughts or feelings of worthlessness, be supportive. Let them know that you are there and willing to help them seek professional help.
- Show them this article.

If you need to seek professional help, contact:

- Mental health specialists, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers or mental health counselors
- Community mental health centers
- Mental health programs at universities or medical schools
- Clergy
- Peer support groups
- Private clinics and facilities

The American Psychological Association has additional information on stress and the holidays: www.apa.org/helpcenter/holiday-season.aspx

Here are some practical tips to assist in minimizing stress and depression that often accompanies this special time of year:

- **Establish Realistic Goals:** Let go of the idea that the holidays have to be perfect. You do not have to attend every party or stay the whole time. You do not have to find the perfect gift for everyone. You do not have to eat and drink everything you are served for fear of offending your host. Do as much as you are comfortable with. It is okay to set boundaries around your time and energies.
- **Maintain Healthy Habits:** Don’t let the holidays be a free-for-all regarding food and alcohol. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Alcohol is a depressant, so it will not help you if you have a case of the blues. Try drinking non-alcoholic punch, water or juice. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so you don’t go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks. Make sure you continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.
- **Set a Budget and Stick to It:** Before you set foot in a store, it is helpful to decide exactly how much you can spend on gifts and food. Knowing your spending limit can reduce stress significantly if you stick to it. Don’t try and buy happiness with gifts. Alternatively, you can donate to a charity in someone’s name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange. Try to enjoy activities that are free, such as concerts or looking at lights. Do not be afraid to set boundaries with your children and say no.
- **Plan Ahead:** Set aside specific days for decorating, shopping, baking, visiting friends and other holiday activities. Plan your menus with plenty of time and then make your shopping list. This will help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. Remember, not all your decorations have to go up. Once the allotted decorating time is done, the rest of the decorations can stay in the box.
- **Take Time for Yourself:** Spending just 15 minutes alone slowing your breathing, without distractions, may refresh you to handle everything you need to do and restore your inner calm. Be sure to make time for special indulgences such as hot baths, candles, listening to soothing music, phone calls to friends, movie rentals, time spent in hobbies, and getting enough sleep. If you are having company, hire a maid service to come clean your house. The expense will be well worth the time saved. If you exercise, don’t stop. If you don’t exercise, consider starting a program very slowly, with the guidance of your physician. Even a brisk walk around the block can re-energize a tired body and mind.
- **Reach Out If You Feel Lonely or Isolated:** For many people, the holidays are a vivid reminder that loved ones have died and are no longer there to celebrate with us. If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out your community. There are often religious or other social events going on during this time that can be very helpful in easing loneliness by offering support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others is also a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.
- **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, or unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or mental health professional.

A TML IEBP Professional Health Coach can help you meet your healthy lifestyle goals & manage stress better

Call a TML IEBP Professional Health Coach at 1-888-818-2822 today

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