

PROTECTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Written by afsp.org

In a recent survey, nearly 88% of adults referred to the holiday season (or the period beginning in November and lasting until the New Year) as the most stressful time of the year. And while some stress is inevitable, too much stress, especially if we are already having mental health challenges, can challenge our ability to cope.

The good news? There are things you can do that can help during this stressful time.

1. Get outside during daylight hours.

Having fewer hours of daylight during the season can have a negative impact on your mood. Especially during the months of November and December, and especially if you struggle with depression, try to find 30 minutes to get outside during daytime hours. Walk somewhere instead of driving, invite a friend or neighbor to take a daily walk, sit outside every day, or watch a sunrise.

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Believe in your infinite potential.
Your only limitations are those
you set upon yourself.

Quotes sourced from Self By Design

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Book of the Month Recommendation

The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom

by Don Miguel Ruiz

In *The Four Agreements*, bestselling author don Miguel Ruiz reveals the source of self-limiting beliefs that rob us of joy and create needless suffering. Based on ancient Toltec wisdom, *The Four Agreements* offers a powerful code of conduct that can rapidly transform our lives to a new experience of freedom, true happiness, and love.

2. Take a risk and connect if you are feeling lonely.

Chances are pretty good that you are not the only one feeling lonely this season. Reach out to someone who may also be feeling that way. Sharing how you are feeling may empower them to do the same. Talk about ways you can stay connected and support each other this season. A regular call, text or note to check in with each other may help both of you.

3. Do at least one thing to improve your sleep this season.

Keeping consistent sleep hours (and getting enough sleep) can help you to better navigate the stressful months of the season. Pick one thing you will do to improve your sleep and do it as consistently as you can. Go to bed 30 minutes earlier, leave your phone in another room, make the room completely dark (or use an eye mask or dark curtains), or keep the thermostat lower, since we often sleep better in cooler temperatures.

4. Take breaks.

Schedule “downtime” following stressful holiday events. Plan time off work, if you can, or schedule some time off following the holiday season. Be mindful about your consumption of news or social media. (In fact, this season is a great time for a social media “break” if you need one.)

5. Remove something from your holiday “to do” list.

If you find yourself overextended this holiday season, let go of something that adds to your stress level. Not in the mood to send holiday cards? Don’t. Want to avoid awkward gift exchanges? Tell others early that you won’t be exchanging gifts this year during the holiday season. If they insist, request to exchange notes with a personal wish for each other, instead.

6. Find the choices within the obligations.

If you find yourself having to attend events you would prefer to avoid, at least do it in a way that gives you as much choice as possible. Avoid contentious conversations by taking a walk after dinner, excusing yourself to use the restroom, or leaving early. Have a buddy you can call during tense moments to debrief.

7. Prioritize activities that support your mental health.

This is the season to focus on doing the things that you already know help your mental health. Keep therapy appointments; reach out to the therapist you stopped seeing (we are usually delighted to hear from you!); or find a new therapist if you need one. Limit or avoid alcohol consumption, which can take a toll on our mental health. Take medication on time, and as prescribed, and plan for needed refills. Come January, you will be glad you made your mental health a priority this season.

For more information or advice, contact eni online at:

www.eniweb.com

Tips for a Healthy Thanksgiving

Get Active

Make fitness a family adventure. Take a walk early in the day and then again after dinner. It is a wonderful way for families to get physical activity and enjoy the holiday together.

Lighten Up

Whether you are hosting Thanksgiving dinner or bringing a few dishes to share, make your recipes healthier with less fat, sugar, and calories.

Go Easy on Alcohol

Don’t forget those alcohol calories that can add up quickly. Have a glass of wine or a wine spritzer and between alcoholic drinks, enjoy sparkling water. This way you stay hydrated, limit alcohol calories, and stay sober.

Focus on Family and Friends

Thanksgiving is not just about the delicious bounty of food. It’s a time to celebrate relationships with family and friends. The main event should be family and friends socializing, spending quality time together, not just what is on the buffet.