



The holiday season

is supposed to be a time full of joy, parties and gatherings with friends and families. But the holidays can be a difficult time for many of us who are dealing with:

- **personal grief**
- **loneliness**
- **illnesses of all kinds**
- **economic concerns**
- **separation from family members**
- **relationship issues separation or divorce**

We talk about peace on earth and yet we live with various kinds of warnings of danger.

Also, the commercialization of the holiday season bombards us with unrealistic expectations. Many of us feel overwhelmed when our “to-do” list goes on forever! While some people experience temporary periods of the “holiday blues” or Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), many of us live with deeper and prolonged feelings of anxiety, grief or depression every day.

The holidays are especially difficult when our own feelings of sadness, loneliness, depression and anxiety are the opposite of the postcard images we see all around us.

This time of year can be stressful for many. Now is your time to learn the importance of self-care...especially during these holiday times of stress. These tips may be helpful.

- maintain your daily routine
- get regular adequate sleep, taking a nap is okay
- eat small more frequent meals rather than filling-up at big meals
- take time for physical activity each day
- even daily stretching will help you
- set aside quiet time for just you
- continue to take any prescribed medication
- keep appointments with your health professionals

During the holidays we may find ourselves at large gatherings or at parties with people who may not understand our feelings, anxiety or grief. People may feel uncomfortable and not know what to say. Others may unintentionally say hurtful things or offer cliché’ advice. Prepare yourself by knowing who may be at a gathering. Large groups can feel overwhelming at any time!

Know that whatever you are feeling, it is right for you at this time. It is all right to excuse yourself for some quiet time away. While continually isolating yourself is not helpful, there are times when solitude can be a time of replenishment, reconnection with yourself and deeply satisfying.

Yet, for some people it is hard to feel down when they are helping others. Volunteering during the holiday season may bring feelings of comfort. The satisfaction of giving to others helps you put your feelings in perspective.

Tips for family and friends

Family and friends should include loved ones in holiday activities to the degree that the person is comfortable. Setting specific times for family traditions like baking special food, decorating the house, wrapping gifts or attending community celebrations, helps us all to be prepared and to have activities to look forward to.

If you are attending a large gathering, plan ahead by sharing your situation with those people closest to you who may not know. This is a wonderful opportunity to reach out and help members of your family or your friends. You can help them find ways to be relaxed and be respectful of any special need. Someone having anxiety, grief or turmoil may feel disconnected they are ignored or avoided. The holidays are about love and caring one another. We all do better when we let go of the “postcard” holiday image and focus on accepting ourselves and how much we love our family and friends.

Tips for communities of faith

Many of our holidays are Holy days. For anyone living in turmoil, hearing familiar stories of faith, singing familiar songs, and participating in religious or family rituals can bring comfort. It is a time of re-connecting with our faith and spirituality. We all can make a special effort to encourage families to invite their loved ones to be part of special activities and services. The holidays are a time of bringing people together in community.

We know that many families sitting in the church pew are living with someone who has special physical or emotional needs. Many families suffer in silence and are afraid to share their pain with others. Including messages of mind-body-spirit is one step reminding us that we are not alone. The holidays remind us that God is the presence of life within us. God is the essence of love in us all. Through God’s love we intentionally reach out to persons within our family and community. Distance and time do not interfere with sending God’s love from within us to the world.




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