FREE your FEELS™

STRESS-FREE HOLIDAY

The holiday season, though often filled with joy, can also bring stress and take a toll on mental health. Family and social gatherings may spark happiness and connection, but they can also surface loneliness, tension, or conflict. We can't forget that mental health matters every season, not just in winter.

HOLIDAY STRESS CAN BE A RESULT OF:

Tense family dynamics, whether with your immediate, extended, or chosen family.
Routine changes from disrupted school and social time.
"Perfect holiday" expectations from family, friends, or social media.
Financial stress from travel, gifts, or other events.
Academic pressure from final assignments and grades being released.
Intense feelings of grief if you have experienced the loss of a person or pet, divorce, or breakup.

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES TO PROTECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON:

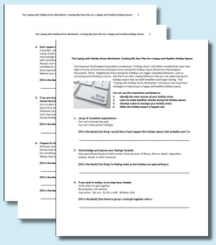
Communicate your needs and boundaries with your family and friends.
Protect your time by taking breaks from group settings or connecting with those who can provide you with support when you need it.
Try to let go of unrealistic expectations for the holidays and understand that everything might not always go as planned.
Make plans with your friends from school to stay connected during the school break and support each other in times of holiday stress.
Set a routine for yourself like planning daily walks, journaling, or calls / texts with friends
Remind yourself of what is important around the holidays and prioritize those experiences and feelings.



RESOURCES

Mental Health FIRST AID
from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

Learn more about holiday stress and tools for wellness in the **Thriving During the Holidays Toolkit from Mental Health First Aid.**



Fill out this **Coping with Holiday Stress Worksheet** to create a plan for the holiday season!



A **brief breathing exercise** can help ease tension and promote relaxation. During holiday stress, take a moment to slow down and practice mindful awareness, either alone or with loved ones.

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

988 is the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, offering free 24/7 support for mental health emergencies.

ACTIVITY:

Write down answers to the following questions to help you prepare for possible stress and help maintain your mental wellbeing during the holiday season:

ONE WORD TO DESCRIBE HOW I AM FEELING AS THE HOLIDAYS ARE APPROACHING...

ONE CHALLENGE OR SOURCE OF STRESS I MIGHT EXPERIENCE DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS...

ONE WAY I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF IF THINGS DON'T GO AS EXPECTED IS...

ONE PERSON I CAN CONNECT WITH DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON OR A SOURCE OF SUPPORT I CAN UTILIZE IS...

ONE RELAXING, REJUVENATING, OR SPECIAL THING I WILL DO FOR MYSELF THIS HOLIDAY SEASON IS...

THE GIFT OF CONNECTION

Building and maintaining social connections is one of the most effective ways to protect your mental health. Research shows that people who regularly interact with friends and family experience less anxiety and recover more quickly from stress. Socializing doesn't have to mean being around big groups all the time; it's about finding the people and spaces where you feel safe and understood. Reaching out might feel uncomfortable at first, but every step toward connection helps strengthen your resilience and sense of belonging.

Follow for more resources!
@freeyourfeelsga

"Free Your Feels" is a mental health awareness campaign encouraging Georgia's young people to explore their real **feelings** and **free** them fearlessly.

ACCESS MORE RESOURCES AT FREEYOURFEELS.ORG