FREE your FEELS

HOLIDAY STRESS

RESOURCE TOOLKIT
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INTRO

For many, November and December are filled with holiday season activities and time off work or school, which can incite feelings of happiness and excitement and/or unease and isolation.

Expectations to attend family gatherings, travel, purchase gifts, or keep up with a growing list of events, while joy-filled, can also be very stressful. Equipping yourself with coping and stress-management strategies can help you get through the holidays and prepare for a healthy new year.

We hope this toolkit will offer the resources and knowledge you need to navigate the next few months. In December, we’ll reissue this toolkit by adding more holiday-related information and will re-distribute it to help everyone prepare for healthy well-being during the end-of-year season.

As always, call or text 988 any time – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – for support.
According to a 2022 American Psychiatric Association (APA) poll, nearly a third (31%) of Americans reported expecting to feel more stressed during the 2022 holiday season compared to the previous year. There are various factors contributing to heightened stress levels, but regardless of the drivers of stress, there are strategies to help manage it all.

### 7 WAYS TO COPE WITH HOLIDAY STRESS

#### PREVENT BURNOUT
It's okay to say "no" or simplify situations that may bring stress (e.g., missing a party in a week that's been too intense at work or opting for store-bought cookies, rather than homemade). Prioritize what brings joy and positive emotional energy.

#### TAKE A BREAK
If you'll be around family, friends, or other gatherings, it's okay to step outside or find some time for yourself away from the crowd.

#### PRACTICE MINDFULNESS
Mindfulness practices (such as meditation, journaling, yoga, deep breathing, and more) can be particularly helpful during the holidays.

#### GO OUTSIDE
Get some fresh air and sunlight! Numerous studies have pointed to the mental health benefits of spending time in nature, including stress relief, better concentration, lower levels of inflammation, and improved mental energy.

#### CONTINUE THERAPY
If you're currently seeing a professional – keeping scheduled therapy sessions helps ensure you've set aside time to explore any feelings that may come up during the holidays. If you'll be traveling, ask your therapist about a virtual meeting option.

#### AVOID FINANCIAL STRESS
If you participate in gift-giving, consider a homemade or handcrafted item instead of expensive gifts.

#### CELEBRATE THE LIVES OF THOSE YOU'VE LOST
Feelings of grief and loss during the holidays can be difficult to manage. Instead of trying to avoid thinking about your loved one, try honoring them by getting together with other family members and friends and celebrating their life stories.

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FOR URGENT SUPPORT TEXT OR CALL 988, OR CALL THE GA CRISIS AND ACCESS LINE: 1-800-715-4225
The “holiday blues” aren’t a myth, particularly for those living with a mental health condition. “The holiday season beams a spotlight on everything that is difficult about living with depression,” said an individual who responded to a NAMI survey about holiday stress. “The pressure to be joyful and social is tenfold.”

**FOR YOUTH**

Nemour’s TeensHealth offers ways to stay physically and mentally well during the months leading up to the new year.

**TAKE ACTION**

**5 WAYS TO STAY HEALTHY FOR THE HOLIDAYS**

- **FIGHT GERMS**
  In the fall and winter, people tend to get sick with colds and the flu. And we’re still dealing with COVID-19. So protect yourself. Get a COVID-19 vaccine and the annual flu vaccine, and wash your hands a lot.

- **EAT HEALTHY AND BE MERRY**
  Holiday foods can be high in calories and low in the nutrition you need to battle germs and boost energy. Make it a priority to eat 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

- **CHILL**
  “Can I afford it? Will it be perfect?” Even things we look forward to, like the holidays, can come with worries attached. If you feel stressed, stop what you’re doing for just a moment. Take 5 deep belly breaths. Concentrate on each breath as you inhale and exhale.

- **BEAT THE BLUES**
  Holiday depression doesn’t just happen in songs. For some people, it’s seasonal, brought on by shorter days, longer nights, and colder weather. Know your triggers and when to take a break.

- **GET SOME ZZZS**
  Getting 8½ to 9 hours of sleep a night during the holidays can help strengthen your immune system, give you more energy, and make you less vulnerable to stress.

READ MORE AT: kidshealth.org/en/teens/holiday-tips.html

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Parents whose families are struggling with grief and loss this holiday season may need additional support to not only manage their own stress but to help their children cope with their feelings as well. Hearing from providers who are working with bereaved parents and caregivers as well as a parent advocate to explore personal experiences can be a huge benefit in coping with grief and loss.

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TAKE ACTION:
The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) released the “I Don't Know How to Have a Happy Holiday” video as part of their “I Don't Know How To: Parent Series” videos. This series explores difficult topics to help equip parents with the tools to navigate and provide support for various mental health conditions.
FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

BONUS ACTION:
A helpful four-page guide, also from NCTSN, titled “Supporting Children and Teens During This Holiday Season”

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Your mindset can dictate (and activate) your body’s stress response. If you feel yourself going into a negative mindset, try to guide your thoughts back to the positive and stay in the present moment through mindful moments. Wondering how to practice mindfulness during the hustle and bustle of holidays?

The Child Mind Institute offers tips for how to enjoy the holidays with more mindfulness. Try to incorporate “mindful moments” with your students prior to extended time away from the classroom. This will build a habit of mindfulness to carry into the holiday season.
QUESTIONS? CONTACT

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