

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WELLNESS SHORTS

Managing Holiday Stress

'Tis the season to be jolly... so why are some of us unhappy during what is supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year?

While the holidays can be a fun and exciting time for many people, it can also be a period of prolonged loneliness, sadness, and anxiety for others.

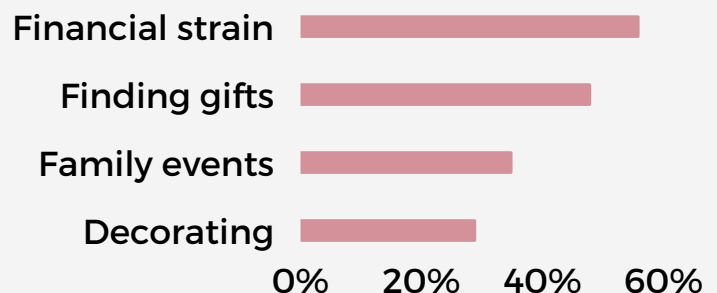
If you experience the blues or feelings of stress around the holidays, know that you are not alone and there are steps you can take to find some peace and joy this holiday season.



MORE THAN 80% OF US FIND THE HOLIDAY SEASON TO BE 'SOMEWHAT' OR 'VERY' STRESSFUL.

64% OF PEOPLE WITH AN EXISTING MENTAL ILLNESS REPORT THAT THE HOLIDAYS MAKE THEIR CONDITION WORSE.

TOP HOLIDAY STRESSORS:

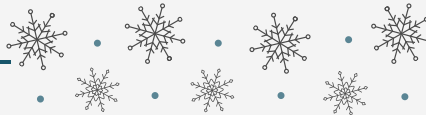


Triggers for Holiday Stress

There are many contributing factors as to why people may experience holiday stress, some of the possible causes include:



- Pressure to conform to cultural and societal norms
- Financial stress
- Unrealistic expectations
- Lack of sleep
- Excessive eating and alcohol use
- Isolation, loneliness, and grief
- Family dynamics and social obligations



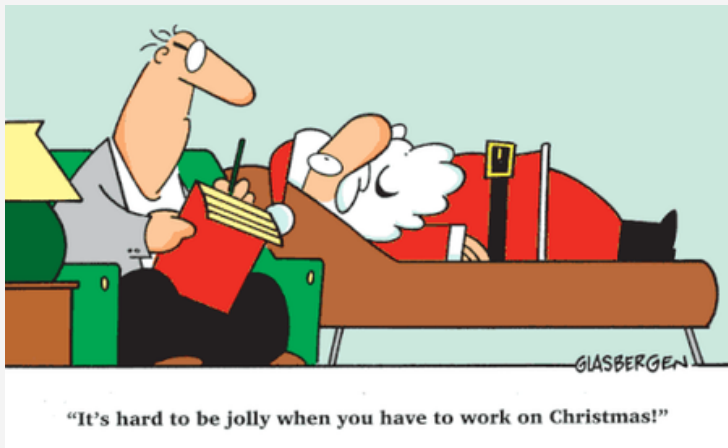
Holiday Stress VS. Seasonal Affective Disorder

Feeling sad during the winter and holiday months may also be a sign of **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)**. SAD is a form of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) that occurs in seasonal patterns during certain months of the year.

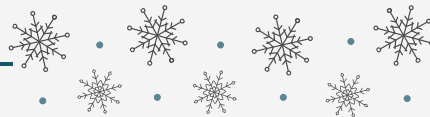


Did You Know...

Holiday stress can spill over and affect performance at work. Here are some signs that you or a coworker may be affected...



- Change in behavior
- Change in appearance
- Lack of focus or concentration
- Unusual tension with other employees
- Change in quality of work performance
- Absenteeism



Quick Tips:

When it comes to stress, it's important to listen to what your body and mind are telling you. If a situation is too stressful, ask yourself why you feel the way you do and consider what you can do to better manage your stress. By learning how to cope with day-to-day stress, you can be better prepared to tackle additional holiday stressors.



FIND TIME FOR YOURSELF

Make sure that you leave enough time for yourself to relax. Even 15 to 20 minutes a day to enjoy some quiet time, read a book, listen to music, take a bath, do yoga, or some other relaxing activity can do wonders for your stress levels.

SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

It's fine to be excited about the holidays and make plans for the things you want to do. But it is also important to keep your expectations realistic and reachable. Holidays change just as people change. Kids grow older, people move, and new people will become a part of your life. The key is to focus on those connections, create new traditions, and remember past holidays with fondness while still enjoying the one right in front of you.

PLAN AHEAD & LEARN TO SAY “NO”

Finding time for all of your holiday activities can be tricky. On top of holiday commitments, you may also have to deal with increased traffic. Or you may feel extra pressure to get ahead of work so you can take time off to travel. Overscheduling and not making time for yourself can lead to emotional breakdowns. Learn how to say “no,” and stay firm on your decision.

KEEP YOUR FINANCES IN CHECK

If you're worried about spending and how it will affect you after the holidays are over, be realistic about what you can afford. The sentiment behind a gift is more important than the cost. Create a budget and stick to it. Spend only what you can afford, and if you don't have the ability to spend anything, bake a treat or offer your talents and time to your friends and loved ones.

GET SUPPORT WHEN MOURNING A LOVED ONE

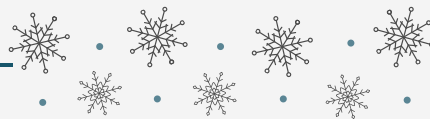
If you've experienced the loss of a loved one, the holidays can be especially tough. Although it can be tempting to isolate yourself and grieve, it can be beneficial to spend time with your friends and family. They can support you through this difficult time.



*If you've tried the tips above and your mood hasn't improved or your symptoms continue well after the holidays, **consider speaking with a mental health professional.** They can help you determine your biggest stressors and find ways to better cope with holiday stress.*



*If you are having suicidal thoughts, contact the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988** for support and assistance from a trained counselor. If you or a loved one are in immediate danger, call 911. For more mental health resources, see our **National Helpline Database.***



While we can't change the season, we can make choices to help minimize the effects of feeling down.

With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.



Brought to you by your Behavioral Health Advocates from Luzerne, Schuylkill, and Allegheny Counties