

# Mental Health Matters

December 2023



## Need Mental Health Support?

OPTUM EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) OFFERS **FREE CONFIDENTIAL HELP**

Call toll-free

**888-444-8624** any time

OR

Go to

[www.liveandworkwell.com](http://www.liveandworkwell.com)

and browse as a guest using

code **CSEBO**

## The Most Difficult Time of The Year: Mental Health During the Holidays

How do you handle so many movies and ads broadcasting family and togetherness if you've lost a loved one or you feel all alone? What do you do with so many messages about everything being "merry and bright" when, in most places, it is quite literally cold and dark?

The truth is that, for many, this can actually be the most difficult time of the year. In 2014, NAMI found that 64% of people with mental illness say the holidays make their conditions worse. A 2021 survey showed that 3 in 5 Americans feel their mental health is negatively impacted by the holidays. And as we face a second holiday season during the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that more people than ever will be grieving someone or something during this time.

So if you find yourself feeling anxious for the holidays, you are certainly not alone. Here are a few steps you can take to prioritize your mental health during this hectic season:

### 1. Accept Your Feelings

The holidays can bring up a range of emotions for people. Sometimes you can even experience seemingly contradictory emotions all at once. Try your best to acknowledge and accept your emotions rather than place judgment on them. It's OK to feel happy; it's OK to feel sad; it's even OK to feel both happy and sad. Give yourself compassion and allow yourself to sit with whatever you're feeling.

### 2. Maintain Healthy Habits

For many people, the holidays lead to a massive disruption in your day-to-day routine. But maintaining healthy habits like going to therapy, getting enough sleep and exercising are critical to keeping your mental health on track.

### 3. Set Boundaries

People like to be generous during the holidays, but that generosity doesn't have to come at the expense of having healthy boundaries. If hosting an event or buying an expensive gift is too stressful, it's OK to say no. It's also OK to limit the time you spend with family that you may have a complicated dynamic with.

Full article found at <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/From-the-CEO/December-2021/The-Most-Difficult-Time-of-The-Year-Mental-Health-During-the-Holidays>





**This newsletter is brought to you by the Mental Health Counselors:**

**Lisa de la O, LMFT:**

805.933.8936

LdelaO@santapaulausd.org

**Rachael Forbes, LMFT:**

805.933.8937

RForbes@santapaulausd.org

**Deborah Ujfalusy, LCSW:**

805.933.8939

DUjfalusy@santapaulausd.org

In case of an Emergency:

- **911 For Immediate Support**
- **Ventura County Crisis Team (866) 998-2243 –(24 hours)**

**MENTAL  
HEALTH  
MATTERS**  
#ENDTHESTIGMA

## 9 tips to fend off holiday stress

The holidays are a time for family and cheer, but making sure the house is clean, the food is ready, and the presents are wrapped and ready to be opened can be overwhelming. These factors can bring unwanted stress and depression in a time meant for happiness.

Some important, practical tips can help minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays. These tips may even help you enjoy the holidays more than expected.

Through the endless parties, cooking, shopping and cleaning, try taking one of 9 steps to ensure you have a stress-free holiday:

1. Plan ahead.

Between co-workers, friends and family, it's inevitable that some commitments will end up on the same day. Make sure to plan on what you can attend in person or virtually. If you're hosting the holidays, create a menu to help you stay organized and make grocery shopping easier.

2. Say no.

With holiday commitments, it is OK to say no to a few or all of them. It also will help relieve some stress. Try sharing your to-do list with other family members.

3. Plan spending.

The holidays mean spending money. Make a budget and stick to it. Spending money on your loved ones is important, but it's also important to pay your energy bill. Don't buy gifts that you'll be paying off for the rest of the year.

4. Create relaxing surroundings.

Turn on some music, light some candles or open the windows on a sunny day. Research has found that listening to music and the scent of citrus can boost feelings of well-being, and vitamin D is always a happiness booster.

5. Maintain healthy habits.

The holidays are notorious for ruining healthy habits. A short workout each morning will help your decision-making throughout the day. Encourage your family to try snow shoeing or sledding to get in extra exercise. Eat healthy snacks like fresh fruit or vegetables throughout the season and to fill up before a dinner party or celebration with tempting, but unhealthy, foods.

6. Share feelings.

Spending a holiday after a loss in the family can be difficult. Accept your feelings and open up about them to others. It may make you feel better to share. Try to switch up old traditions to ease the loss.

7. Respect differences.

Family members will have different viewpoints than your own. Try your best to forgive and forget this holiday season. Focus on your similarities, and replace tension with something productive.

Full article found at <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/fend-off-holiday-stress-with-these-tips>