

HOLIDAY TIMES

*Provided through the Marketing and Development Committee
of the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas*

As holidays approach, our busy lives do not always allow us “to do” the many things we want to do or feel we “ought to” do. There are many reasons holidays become stressful. The “to do” list includes too many things we want to do, and even more we feel we “ought to” do. Family members have different expectations, and don’t always agree. People wait until too late to talk about their feelings and plans. The areas that help manage stress are neglected such as good nutrition, adequate rest and exercise.

REDUCE CHILDREN’S STRESS

- Set an evenly paced holiday season
- Set realistic expectations
- Create a sense of security & comfort
- Involve children, welcome their input



COMMON REASONS FOR DISSATISFACTION DURING AND AFTER THE HOLIDAYS

- Not enough time
- Not enough money
- Not enough family support
- Not enough help
- Family conflicts
- Didn’t meet expectations

START A NEW TRADITION WITH HEALTHY HABITS

- Set realistic goals, reduce expectations, simplify decorations and meals.
- Ask for support from others, and get help by delegating responsibility.
- Stay on a budget.
- Remove “always” and “never” from your vocabulary.
- Avoid using alcohol or other drugs to mask pain.
- Consider volunteering at a community or religious function.
- Give different gifts - free childcare, household help, family heirloom, family recipe book, old photos, the gift of humor.
- Do something nice for someone in need - food baskets, make or repair toys, take cookies to police or firefighters who work on holidays.
- Take care of yourself; eat right; exercise and rest; avoid doing too much.
- Stay in touch with family and friends, ask a friend who is alone to join your family’s holiday dinner.
- Acknowledge your feelings, focus on what is good in your life and nurture the relationships you value.
- Schedule a few favorite activities for the week after Christmas.



Make PEOPLE more important than things, traditions and schedules

HOLIDAY BLUES

For some, the approaching holidays serve as unwanted reminders of loss, and feelings of sadness stand in stark contrast to seasonal images of family dinners and gift-giving. People who struggle with the “holiday blues” may experience stress, tension and changes in sleep and eating patterns. It is important to set reasonable goals and expectations for the holidays. Try to focus on the positive and avoid dwelling on the past. If possible, try to share some meaningful, positive memories. Avoid indulging excessively in alcohol and food. For most people, the holiday blues tend to fade away once the season has past.

The holiday blues can lead to more serious depression. If a feeling of sadness continues for several weeks along with changes in appetite, difficulty sleeping, unusual fatigue, severe anxiety or persistent unhappiness, talk with a doctor or a mental health professional. The holiday blues may have turned into a clinical depression and the sooner treatment begins, the sooner one can recover.

**Focus on the positive, and
avoid dwelling on the past.**



**Make cards
Send cards**

**Get the tree
Decorating**

**Family gatherings
Traveling**

**Make gifts
Shop for gifts**

**Baking
Preparing meals**



**Unplanned, unexpected events
are often the most remembered
...the tree that fell over
...stranded at the airport**

LOSS AND GRIEF

The holiday season often renews feelings of grief associated with the loss of loved ones. Here are a few suggestions for getting through such difficult times:

- Acknowledge your feelings and share those with family and friends.
- Do not isolate yourself by staying at home alone.
- Establish a family ritual or set aside some special time that honors that loved one.
- Keep in mind that time does heal.

MORE INFORMATION

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