

## MANAGING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE HOLIDAYS

While many things can bring down your holiday spirit, there are plenty of ways you can manage your mental health throughout the holiday season. Some of these tips include:

- Set Realistic Expectations: Every holiday season, people compare the current year to years
  past. But life changes. Set realistic goals for yourself and your holiday plans. Don't compare
  yourself to past years. Focus on what you can do to make this holiday season the best it can
  be.
- Don't Rely on Drugs and Alcohol: Alcohol is a natural depressant. So, while you might feel
  relieved in the moment, it isn't a long-term fix. According to the Anxiety and Depression
  Association of America (ADAA), there is a 20% overlap between anxiety and mood
  disorders and substance use. Turning to drugs and alcohol for relief will only make things
  worse.
- Keep Following Healthy Habits: To piggyback off the last tip, do not abandon your healthy
  habits. If you limit your drinking, keep it up. Continue to eat healthy meals, exercise, and
  practicing mindfulness techniques.
- Plan Ahead: Try to space out your responsibilities so that you don't have to rush to
  complete them. Set aside days to shop for gifts. Plan a day to cook. Establish travel plans
  well in advance. Doing so will help ease the stress you feel.
- Say No: The holidays are incredibly busy. People tend to have a full schedule, but
  people often feel the pressure to say yes to everything. But that leaves you with more
  stress. Learn to say no. Leave yourself time to relax and decompress.
  - Acknowledge Your Feelings: There are many reasons to feel upset during the holidays.
    It's okay to feel this way. Acknowledge how you feel and tell yourself these feelings are
    validated. The more you bottled them up, the worse they will be.
  - Reach Out for Help: Above all else, do not be afraid to reach out for help. If you are
    feeling lonely, stressed, anxious, or depressed, you don't need to go through it alone.
    Reach out to loved ones and let them know how you feel. They might be able to alleviate
    some of the stress that comes with the holiday season. Don't feel ashamed of your
    feelings. They are perfectly normal.