



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.