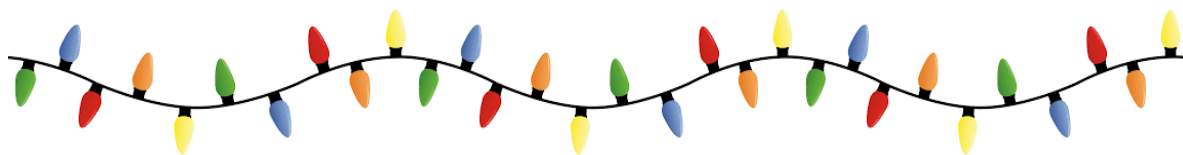




Stress Reduction During the Holidays and Beyond



The holidays often bring a special anticipation of togetherness with family, friends, co-workers, and community. However, for many people, the holidays are also a time of increased stress and pressure to create the perfect event or purchase just the right gifts. In addition, some people experience loss, loneliness and grief over the holidays, which may perpetuate year after year.

Here are some tips to guide you in approaching the holidays with a clear sense of purpose:

1. **Create a Sense of Quiet, Stillness, Peace, and Gratitude**

Practicing mindfulness or spirituality can give us a quiet respite from the fast pace rushing around that is common during the holidays. Appreciating what is around and within us can help us look at stressors from a different angle and offer moments of peace and gratitude.

2. **Practice Self-Compassion**

Self-compassion involves treating ourselves as you would treat a friend who is having a hard time, instead of beating ourselves up for not being perfect. This may include saying “no” to certain invitations, being compassionate in the way we “talk to ourselves,” and giving ourselves permission to do something good for us.

3. **Increase Meaning**

Reflect on the meaning the holidays have for you, and focus on what you need at this time. If you have experienced loss around the holidays, how might you create a new tradition that allows you to grieve and take care of yourself? Consider spending time out in nature, treating yourself to something relaxing, volunteering to give back to your community, or helping a friend in need, to be reminded of the true spirit of the holidays.

4. **Enhance a Sense of Connectedness**

Feeling a part of something greater than ourselves can make us feel less isolated and alone. Most stressors seem smaller and easier to deal with when we feel like we belong to and can connect with others or a higher power. Make a special effort to reach out to people in your community; you might find that your presence offers them comfort, as well.

5. **Gain Perspective**

Spiritual practice can help us make problems more manageable. In addition, spirituality helps us to clarify our values, and focus on related goals that are important, rather than becoming consumed by material things or circumstances that are not as important to us.

6. **Get Organized**

Make a “to-do” list, and rank items in order of priority. Keep things simple, and don’t over-commit. Focus on what is most important to you and let go of what matters less.

(Adapted from [MentalHealth.Net](https://www.mentalhealth.net))