



Approaching the holiday season with an open mind

For many people, the holiday season is a time for good cheer, shopping and family gatherings. For others, the holidays can be a hard time. Many people feel more stress, disappointment, guilt and sadness around holiday time.

All these emotions can contribute to added stress and uncertainty. One way to combat these negative emotions is to cut yourself some slack and embrace self-care.

Tips for a happier holiday

- Set realistic expectations. Don't aim for perfection or expect everything to go exactly as planned.
- Give yourself and others compassion. Be gentle and understanding with yourself. Treat yourself like you'd treat a good friend.
- Allow your emotions. If you start to feel sad, let yourself be sad. Notice where you feel the emotion in your body. Know that no feeling lasts forever.
- Engage in activities that help you relax or feel contented, such as reading or taking a walk.
- Manage your time. Let others know what you can and can't do. Don't say "yes" when you really mean "no." It's okay to pass on an activity if you're not feeling up to it. Keep the demands on your time, energy and wallet to a minimum.
- Ask for and accept support. When someone offers help — whether it's a shoulder to cry on or a quiet dinner together — take them up on it. It's important to lean on your support system.
- Take care of your basic needs. Eat healthy foods and stay hydrated. Get enough sleep and make

time for exercise.

- Let go of "shoulds." It's okay if you don't feel like decorating or carrying on the same traditions. Give yourself permission to mix things up and do what's best for you.
- Carefully choose the events you want to attend. Celebrate with people whose company lifts your spirits. Focus on what the holidays mean for you.
- If you're away from family and friends, look for ways to stay connected. If you're grieving the loss of a loved one, honor and share your feelings of grief with people who are supportive.
- Get professional support. A mental health provider can help you work through challenges around holiday time and beyond. If you're feeling lonely, depressed, anxious or having an otherwise difficult time, know that you are not alone. Support is available. Take care of yourself and reach out for help.

This material provides a general overview of the topic. Health information is not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment by a therapist, physician or other health care professional. Contact a health care professional with any questions or concerns about specific health care needs.