



Holiday Stress Management Tips

The Holidays can be a source of cheer, excitement, and lofty expectations. It can also be a source of unwanted stress, depression, fatigue, and shattered dreams for many.

Psalm 3:5 “I lie down and sleep, I awake because the Lord sustains me”

Here are some tips and biblical strategies for reducing stress and management of your mental health through the holidays:

1. Acceptance

Management of your mental health during the holidays first requires acceptance of yourself and your flaws. If you struggle with chronic anxiety, depression, situational factors, addictions, or have a diagnosed personality disorder, thinking that you should be different during the holidays can lead to negative thought patterns that will influence your feelings and behavior.

Ephesians 1:4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.

2. Eliminate Hurry

It can be tempting to get in a rush during the holidays. Learning to say “no” to all the events on your calendar is a fantastic way to avoid overpacking your schedule and overextending yourself.

Management of stress is important to avoid decreasing your immune system responses as stress kicks in. This is important as the respiratory virus season is at its peak! Plan virtual meetings if it reduces travel and keeps you safe!

3. Manage your expectations

Avoid setting unrealistic expectations of yourself during the holidays. This is especially important for individuals with mental health challenges as one can easily become susceptible to depressive feelings or anxiety when things do not measure up. Social media and marketing strategies paint an unrealistic view of how the holidays look for others. Speaking with your loved ones or your spouse when these feelings come up can help you to remain accountable.

4. Take Care of yourself

a. Maintain Healthy Habits

Holiday season is notorious for ruining your healthy habits. While it is okay to indulge in the holiday festivities, big dinners and parties can take us off track. It is important to remember to take all medications, manage portion size, and avoid the temptation to cancel therapy appointments. Use an accountability system or trusted support to help you realize when you have gotten off track and to help you stick to your goals!

b. Stick to a Routine

Try to stick to your normal routines as much as possible. Finding a balance between activity and rest is important. If you are lucky enough to have more time off during the holidays, try to plan for movement, going outdoors, and participating in activities that are meaningful. Avoid oversleeping and inactivity. Create relaxing surroundings.

1 Corinthians 10: 31: So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

5. Respect and Accept Differences

Holiday movies and family gatherings can create a feeling of nostalgia. This can be incredibly difficult if family relationships have experienced tension or if there are long-rooted differences. Refer to number 3 first and make a personal goal to respect differences amongst family members. Try to forgive this holiday season in a safe, personal, and appropriate way and recognize that it does not mean that healing must be accelerated. Go at your own pace. Try to replace feelings of tension with something productive and meaningful.

Colossians 3:13: "bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

6. Manage your Spending

Plan and stick to a budget. Make sure that the essentials remain covered (I.e., lights, water, mortgage, car payments, and credit card payments). Identify how much is reasonable to spend on family members and be creative with gifts to avoid overspending. Be honest with family members if your budget does not warrant gifts and find other ways to show them you care. Avoid financing the holidays with high interest as this can contribute to negative feelings once the holidays have passed.

Mark 4:19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful

7. Avoid Comparisons

Avoiding unhealthy comparisons to others is a wonderful way to avoid negative thoughts and feelings that arise during the holidays. Try gratitude meditation, gratitude lists, and journaling for helpful reminders for yourself.

Galatians 6:4-5 Each of you must examine your own actions. Then you can be proud of your own accomplishments without comparing yourself to others.

8. Love Yourself!!!!

Sheronda Moore OTR/L, LMHCA is an occupational therapist and mental health counselor associate in Indianapolis, IN. Mental Health Educator IKC UCC.