



Words About Wellness

Wellness for the Holidays



As we all know, the holiday season can be a particularly busy and difficult time for many people. This is a time with added stressors, which can lead to anxiety symptoms. It is also a time where people may feel especially aware of any loneliness they feel or of voids left by the loss of loved ones, which can lead to depression.

The Canadian Mental Health Association has identified some tips for mental wellness during the holidays:

- **Budget:** Plan your budget in advance for the many expenses during the holidays to ensure you are not overextending yourself. Only spend cash or debit. Maybe host a Secret Santa event where you can buy one gift for your group of friends or family.
- **Family:** Family can bring conflict at times. Try to be realistic about what you can and cannot do, set boundaries with your family and communicate them, and consider staying a shorter period at your family's house or choosing one family to visit instead of trying to see and please everyone or combining families.
- **Overindulging:** When planning your holiday schedule, allow yourself opportunities to be active. Be gentle with yourself and understand that our goal is to limit consumption or inactivity, not to eliminate it completely.
- **Taking on too much:** Pace yourself and do not take on more responsibilities than you can handle. Cut out things that are not truly important. Make a list and prioritize important activities. Decide on your limits and stick to them. Let others help.
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- **Loneliness and Isolation:** Pick a winter hobby or join a group for planned interactions. Volunteer with a non-profit – this can be rewarding and could result in making new friends! If you know you will have a tough time this season, tell people to check up on you.
- **Loss:** If you have lost a loved one and this is a reminder, acknowledge that this holiday season won't be the same. Take this as an opportunity to create new traditions to keep their memory alive. Spend time with supportive and caring people who understand what you are going through.
- **Seasonal Affective Disorder:** This is a type of depression related to changes in seasons, which can include tiredness, depression, irritability, trouble concentrating, body aches, insomnia, decreased interest, and overeating. Treatments may include light therapy, psychotherapy, and medications. Speak to a mental health professional about these options if you are suffering.
- **Year-End Reflection:** Take stock of things that are going well or that you have done well. Do not focus only on what you do not have, or you will forget to be grateful for what you do have.

It is normal to feel some added stress during the holidays, and some people may be able to just “get over it” on their own. Try the tips above to see if they help. Also, consider mindfulness meditation, which works on paying attention on purpose, without judgment, when looking at our thoughts and feelings. Creating a routine can also help things be more manageable. However, **if your holiday depression, anxiety or stress seems severe or is interfering with your job or home life, talk to your doctor.**

