

Managing Mental Illness During the Holidays



The holiday season is often perceived as a time of celebration and for enjoying the company of others. However, amidst the celebration and festive activities, we know that overwhelming commitments, stress and anxiety are common and health concerns may be overlooked.

Research suggests during the festive season 77% of people who have been diagnosed with severe anxiety and depression say they experience a return or worsening of symptoms. While asking for help may seem simple enough, those dealing with mental health issues may hesitate because they do not want to bother others or they may feel they do not deserve help. A belief that asking for help is a sign of weakness, laziness or incompetence may also be a barrier to seeking assistance. This is associated with the stigma around mental illness.

Friends, family and colleagues are often available to assist but may be unsure how they are best able to help. The false belief of 'spoiling' the festivity for others, may also keep individuals from offering assistance when they see someone struggling.

Asking for help can give permission to others to do the same. If speaking to individuals in the workplace or in our private lives is not reasonable, remember there are support services available that are ready to assist us and will take our concerns seriously.

Tips on how to ask for help

- identify the problem
- assess your resources
- talk with a trustworthy family member or friend
- ask clearly for what you need
- show your appreciation

Tips on how to offer help

- provide local contact information for support
- encourage them to speak to their physician
- stay in contact and follow up
- listen
- do not act as a counsellor, be their friend
- talk specifically about what you are seeing

Facing Facts is the University's campaign to tackle to stigma of mental illness.

www.virtualwellness.ualberta.ca

Talk About It.

Contact Information:

Staff members:

Employee and Family Assistance Program
Phone: 780.428.7587
www.hrs.ualberta.ca/efap

Human Resource Services (OHE)
Phone: 780.492.7124
www.hrs.ualberta.ca

Students:

Counseling & Clinical Services
Phone: 780.492.5205
www.uwell.ualberta.ca

Graduate Students:

Graduate Student Assistance Program
Phone: 780.428.7587
www.hrs.ualberta.ca/gsap

Postdoctoral Follows:

Postdoctoral Fellows Assistance Program
Phone: 780.428.7587
www.hrs.ualberta.ca/pdap