

# Maintaining Mental Health During the Holiday Season

Although the holiday season can bring joy it can also be a significant source of stress for many. For some, it can potentially lead to a diagnosis of depression or anxiety.

- Financial, social and family pressures; raised and/or unmet expectations; and loneliness are the major triggers of holiday related stress and can affect any of us.
- Nearly 77% of people with a diagnosis of anxiety or depression say they experience a return or worsening of symptoms over the holidays.
- Individuals dealing with addictions, seasonal affective disorder, and grief are all more at risk for an increase in symptoms during the holidays.

The strategies below can help you manage holiday stress and successfully navigate through the holiday season.

- **Make connections.** Positive relationships with family and friends are important. When relationships are strained adjust your expectations, defuse arguments, and don't get caught up in others' disagreements. Reach out to others that you know may be alone.
- **Set priorities, realistic goals, and keep things in perspective.** Adjusting your expectations is vital in controlling stress. Before too many activities overwhelm you decide what is important to you.
- **Recognize your past responses to holiday stress, and identify your plan for dealing with holiday stress this year.** This is often the time of year that people will indulge in unhealthy habits such as overeating, drinking alcohol, and overspending.
- **Stay within your budget.** Plan your holiday spending, and stick to it! Financial strain has been reported as one of the most significant components of holiday stress, and the fall out of overspending can continue well into the new year.
- **Take care of yourself.** Attend to your needs and feelings during the holidays. Engage in activities that you find fun and relaxing. Games, movies, and activities that make you laugh, spending time with pets, quiet time alone or with a loved one can all help reduce stress. Make healthy choices, exercise and get enough sleep.
- **Ask for help.** Don't hesitate. Family members, co-workers, supervisors, family doctors, and clergy are all possible sources of assistance. It can also help to talk through your issues and feelings with a counselor or psychologist.

Remember, people experience stress differently. Define what holiday stress means to you, and how you know you are stressed? Identify the holiday events or situations that trigger feelings of stress. Is it relationships, work, home?

**Prevention and early intervention are key.  
Don't ignore the signs.**

## Contact Information:

### Staff members & eligible dependents:

Employee and Family Assistance Program  
Phone: 780.428.7587  
[www.hrs.ualberta.ca/efap](http://www.hrs.ualberta.ca/efap)

Human Resource Service (OHE)  
Phone: 780.492.7124  
[www.hrs.ualberta.ca](http://www.hrs.ualberta.ca)

### Postdoctoral Fellows

Postdoctoral Fellows Assistance Program  
phone: 780.428.7587  
[www.hrs.ualberta.ca/pdap](http://www.hrs.ualberta.ca/pdap)

### Students:

Graduate Student Assistance Program  
Phone: 780.428.7587  
[www.hrs.ualberta.ca/gsap](http://www.hrs.ualberta.ca/gsap)

Counseling & Clinical Services  
Phone: 780.492.5205  
[www.uwell.ualberta.ca](http://www.uwell.ualberta.ca)

