

2020 November Health Notes by Evelyn Ames

Actively Reducing Holiday Stress

Fall and winter celebrations, such as Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Halloween, Día de los Muertos, Navratri, Diwali, Thanksgiving, Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Christmas, and New Year's, typically include large gatherings of families and friends, crowded parties, and travel that may put people at increased risk of transmittable diseases and/or emotional physical distress. With the continuing pandemic, the end of the year 2020 and beginning of 2021 leave unanswered questions about family and friend gatherings. For many, events surrounding holidays create stress, wanted or unwanted; or what can be called eustress, which is positive, and distress, which is negative. How can you actively deal with stress and maintain a quality of life throughout the seasons?

Expressing appreciation and gratitude of what one has, being optimistic in these difficult pandemic times, helping others by performing acts of kindness, staying connected with friends and family whether virtual or otherwise, taking some deep breaths when a negative stressor pops up, maintaining your physical energy level, and savoring life's joys by remembering that simple things bring rewards.

The Mayo Clinic provides the following tips to prevent holiday stress and depression:

- Acknowledge feelings. It is okay to express feelings, especially sad ones.
- Reach out. Feeling lonely or isolated? Seek out social events in your community. Many community (e.g., religious, professional, retirement, exercise) groups have online support groups and virtual events. Due to COVID-19, it is not going to be easy to volunteer but consider dropping off a meal or dessert at a friend's or neighbor's house.
- Be realistic because holidays do not have to be perfect or like those you experienced last year. Create new traditions. As more of us are "Zooming" or using other forms to chat online, set aside time to meet virtually. Remember the good old telephone is right at your fingertips!
- Set aside grievances and differences until an appropriate time to discuss them.
- Establish a budget and stick with it. "Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts." Remember the adage that money does not buy happiness. Consider making homemade gifts or donating to a charity in a person's name.
- Maintain your store of healthy habits. A healthy snack before holiday meals may help one from going overboard on drinks and sweets.
- Get plenty of sleep. Incorporate regular physical activity into each day.
- Consider adjusting the amount of time spent viewing news, especially distressing news, and social media.
- Learn to say no because saying yes when you wanted to say no often makes a person feel resentful and overwhelmed.
- Make time for yourself! Find activities you enjoy and do them! Read a book! Listen to music. Watch beautiful sunsets!
- Laugh!!!! Smile!!!!

Stress and depression can ruin holidays and hurt one's health. Being realistic, planning ahead, and seeking support help ward off stress and depression.

Sources: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20047544>

Other source to consider: <https://www.npr.org/2019/11/11/778296959/holiday-survival-guide-family-style>