

Managing Mental and Emotional Needs During the Holidays

The holiday season is here, and we know that many of the more traditional holiday celebrations will look different this year. For some, this time of year brings joy and cheer; for others, this time of year may bring feelings of stress, sadness or isolation. As we navigate through the holiday season in the midst of a pandemic, these feelings may only be exacerbated.

As we near the closing of what has been an incredibly challenging year, it's important to focus on maintaining mental well-being and health. There are many ways to cope with tough feelings while still enjoying the holidays:

1. Acknowledge your feelings

- Feeling lonely? Blue? You don't have to keep it to yourself. Talk to a friend or loved one. Tell them how you're feeling. For more local behavioral health tips and resources, visit <https://www.elpasocountyhealth.org/managing-mental-and-emotional-needs>
- The holidays can be particularly difficult for those grieving the death of a loved one. Honor and remember lost loved ones in a way that is meaningful to you. Watch their favorite holiday movie, participate in an activity they enjoyed or prepare a meal they loved and cherished.

2. Make time for yourself

- Whether it's watching your favorite holiday movie or going for a walk, make sure to take time to do the things that make you happy. Carving out a little time for yourself can recharge your battery and help you feel more energized.

3. Focus on healthy habits

- Take care of your physical health to support your mental health. Regular exercise can help you feel better, function better, and sleep better. To feel your best, add a few servings of healthy fruits and veggies each day and make sure that you get plenty of sleep.

4. Stick to a budget

- The holidays can be especially stressful when it comes to spending money. Before you go gift shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. You can also start a family gift exchange. Also, when shopping for holiday gifts this year, consider taking advantage of online sales, home delivery and curbside pick-up rather than visiting crowded stores.

5. Re-prioritize the meaning of the holiday

- Remember that while your holiday season may normally be full of excitement and joy, it can also be a time of high stress. Even though you may be giving up some of your favorite things about the holidays this year, you might also be leaving some stressors behind.

- Make a conscious effort to regularly identify some things that you're grateful for. It can be something as broad as your family, or something as specific as your favorite song playing on the radio the last time you got in the car.

6. Find creative ways to stay connected.

- Reach out to friends and family if possible or call a support line if you need to talk. Although the holidays will look different and you may not be able to physically spend time with those you love, look for ways to connect virtually.

7. Practice self-compassion.

- Be gentle with yourself during these challenging months.

8. For more information and resources:

- Colorado Crisis Services Hotline
 - 1-844-493-8255, or text "TALK" to 38255
 - This hotline will connect you to a crisis counselor or trained professional. The staff will assess risk and determine if a mobile response is necessary.
 - <https://www.aspenpointe.org/covidresponse>
- El Paso County Public Health
 - For local behavioral health resources, visit <https://www.elpasocountyhealth.org/managing-mental-and-emotional-needs>