



## **COPING DURING THE HOLIDAYS**

### **Background**

The holiday season can bring joy and celebration, but also it can bring stress, grief, loneliness, and overwhelming expectations. For many, this time of year amplifies personal or professional challenges, strained relationships, financial pressure, or memories of past loss. In high-pressure healthcare settings, where healthcare professionals are already stretched thin, the emotional toll of the holidays can be especially heavy.

This Tip Sheet offers practical strategies to support your wellbeing during the holiday season. The tips below include ways to nurture yourself across the 9 Dimensions of Wellness. You may find one domain especially relevant or benefit from exploring several. These strategies are not one-size-fits-all but are designed to help you pause, reflect, and cope with intention and care.



## **Physical Wellness**

*The holiday season can be physically demanding, so attending to your body's basic needs is essential for maintaining balance and energy.*

- Stick to a regular sleep schedule as much as possible, aiming for consistency even during days off or travel
- Prioritize nutritious meals and mindful eating while also giving yourself permission to enjoy special holiday treats
- Stay hydrated and limit excessive consumption of alcohol, caffeine, or sugar that can disrupt your physical wellness
- Engage in physical activity you enjoy, whether it's walking, running, stretching, using exercise machines, dancing, or playing outside with loved ones to help manage stress and improve mood

## **Emotional Wellness**

*Holidays may bring a mix of joy and sorrow. Recognizing and accepting your emotional experiences can support your overall wellbeing.*

- Allow space for all emotions - whether grief, joy, nostalgia, or frustration - without judgment
- Practice self-compassion by acknowledging that the holidays may not feel perfect and that it's okay to need extra support
- Set healthy emotional boundaries, especially in situations where interactions might feel overwhelming or triggering
- Identify one or two trusted individuals you can check in with throughout the season as needed





## **Spiritual Wellness**

*Connecting with your sense of purpose, meaning, or inner peace can provide grounding during busy or emotional seasons.*

- Reflect on what helps you feel connected to something larger than yourself including nature, art, faith, or quiet time, and make space for it
- Practice gratitude daily, even in small ways, to focus on what nourishes your spirit
- Engage in mindfulness or meditation practices to center yourself amidst external demands
- Consider volunteering or giving back in a way that aligns with your values and brings a sense of fulfillment
- Participate in religious or spiritual traditions that are personally meaningful or interpersonally connecting

## **Social Wellness**

*Meaningful connection and support can ease feelings of isolation and foster a sense of belonging during the holidays.*

- Prioritize relationships that feel safe, affirming, and uplifting - even brief conversations or texts can be grounding
- Balance time with others and time alone depending on your needs
- Create or maintain simple traditions with friends, neighbors, or colleagues that bring a sense of joy or familiarity
- Reach out to someone who might also be struggling during the holidays; giving support can also help you feel more connected



## **Cultural Wellness**

*Honoring your values, heritage, and chosen rituals and traditions can be especially meaningful during the holiday season.*

- Reflect on what cultural practices are important to you, and consider how you'd like to engage with them this year
- If family traditions feel difficult or inaccessible, adapt or create new ones that reflect your current identity and needs
- Consider adapting or creating new family traditions that better reflect who you are and what you need right now
- Make room for others' customs or beliefs with curiosity and compassion, especially in diverse or blended gatherings
- Incorporate rituals, foods, music, or stories that bring a sense of continuity and comfort

## **Financial Wellness**

*Holiday spending can add stress, so it helps to approach finances with mindfulness and planning.*

- Set a realistic budget for gifts, travel, or events and give yourself permission to stick to it
- Focus on low-cost or no-cost gestures of kindness, such as handwritten notes or acts of service
- Talk openly with loved ones about your financial limits to avoid unnecessary pressure or guilt
- Reframe gift-giving to include shared experiences or quality time instead of solely relying on material items





## **Environmental Wellness**

*The physical spaces you spend time in can affect your mood and stress levels, especially during hectic seasons.*

- Create calm in your space with small sensory anchors like soft lighting, calming scents, or seasonal decorations you enjoy
- Organize or tidy one small space that helps restore a sense of control or clarity
- Limit exposure to overstimulating environments when you feel overwhelmed
- Spend time outdoors or in natural settings, when possible, even for a short walk or fresh air

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## **Final Note**

If you're experiencing emotional distress, overwhelming sadness, or are finding it hard to function as you normally would, it's important to reach out. You are not alone.

### Seek professional help if:

- You've experienced high levels of distress during previous holidays
- You anticipate this season may be particularly difficult
- You are struggling to manage your emotions, responsibilities, or relationships
- You have thoughts of suicide or harming yourself or others
- You are consuming substances excessively

## **Helpful Resources**

### Support at Emory University

- Emory Faculty Staff Assistance Program:  
<https://hr.emory.edu/eu/fsap/index.html>
- Emory Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences:  
<https://med.emory.edu/departments/psychiatry/index.html>
- Emory University Spiritual Health:  
<https://spiritualhealth.emory.edu/>
- Emory Staff Wellness Resources:  
<https://www.emoryhealthcare.org/>

### Support at Grady Health System

- Grady Resiliency Program: (404)616-7222;  
employeeeresiliency@gmh.edu
- Nurse Coaching Sessions: cheer@gmh.edu
- Grady Chaplaincy Office: Day Time: (404) 616-4270; After  
Hours: (470) 834-7354
- Employee Assistance Program: (888)293-6948





## References

- American Psychological Association. (2023). Managing stress for a healthy family. <https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/family>
- Cleveland Clinic. (2022). How to manage holiday stress. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/how-to-manage-holiday-stress>
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- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2023). Holiday stress resource guide. <https://www.hhs.gov/mental-health-and-addiction>