

December

Behavioral Health Wellness Shorts

Managing Seasonal Stress

The holidays are a busy time and they last from Thanksgiving through New Year's Eve. This period might include celebrations and get-togethers for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and New Year's Eve. That's a long period of time.

While it may be an exciting stretch for many people, it can also be a prolonged period of loneliness and sadness for others. Throughout this time, emotions are heightened.

There are many contributing factors as to why people may experience holiday stress, some of the possible causes include:

- Pressure to conform to cultural and societal norms
- Financial stress
- Unrealistic expectations
- Lack of sleep
- Excessive eating and alcohol use
- Isolation, loneliness, and grief
- Family dynamics and social obligations



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Wintertime Challenges:

The cold-weather months can present a unique set of stressors. Not only do people spend more time indoors than outside because it gets darker sooner, but they're also less likely to socialize or connect with others.

The additional drop in temperature tends to keep both social and physical activity to a minimum. You don't feel like driving, exercising, or traveling. You feel cold, weary, and achy. Aside from going to work or school, the isolation of winter can lead to loneliness and feelings of helplessness.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the Holiday Blues are temporary feelings of anxiety or depression during the holidays that can be associated with extra stress, unrealistic expectations or even memories that accompany the season.

Some symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Tension
- Frustration
- Loneliness or isolation
- A sense of loss

The most common symptom of the Holiday Blues is a persistent or recurring feeling of sadness that begins during the holiday season. This feeling may vary in intensity and duration.

Did You Know?...

Holiday stress & Winter blues can spill over and affect performance at work. Some signs that you or a coworker may be affected include:

- Change in behavior
- Change in appearance
- Lack of focus or concentration
- Unusual tension with other employees
- Change in quality of work performance
- Absenteeism

Quick Tips:

When it comes to stress, it's important to listen to what your body and mind are telling you. If a situation is too stressful, ask yourself why you feel the way you do and consider what you can do to better manage your stress. By learning how to cope with day-to-day stress, you can be better prepared to tackle additional seasonal stressors.

Here are 8 strategies you may want to consider:

1. Stick to a routine
2. Give yourself space to acknowledge your feelings
3. Start a new holiday tradition
4. Do a Vibe Check
5. Rethink gift giving
6. Volunteer with your loved ones
7. Stop comparison in its tracks
8. Set boundaries

*If mood hasn't improved or your symptoms continue well after the holidays, consider speaking with a mental health professional. They can help you determine your biggest stressors and find ways to better cope with holiday stress.