



SELF-CARE DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Tips & Tricks Toolkit



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. Beating the Blues**
 - a. Anger**
 - b. Stress**
 - c. Anxiety**
 - d. 5-Step Approach**
- 2. Know Your Limits**
- 3. Avoid Isolation**
- 4. Giving Means You Too!**
- 5. Tools & Resources**



BEATING THE BLUES

The holidays are usually seen as a time of happiness and rejoicing. But for some, it can be a difficult period of sadness, loneliness, and anxiety. But why is that exactly?



Even people who love the holidays can experience the blues during this busy season. It can often be a time of high emotion, demands, and loneliness, which can leave many people feeling stressed and exhausted. Figuring out what parts of the holidays cause you to feel a certain way can help you figure out how to deal with those emotions. Which of these do you find yourself thinking?

I have way too much to do.

Is it safe?

I can't stand my relatives.

What if this person doesn't like my gift to them?

I won't enjoy myself at all.

Understanding your feelings helps you build efficient strategies to face them. You can ease your holiday blues by learning what its' biggest triggers are. Here are a few examples of potential triggers during the holiday season:



- Social event overload - visiting too many different places OR too many people in your safe space;
- Extended family time or conflict with a family member;
- COVID-19 or other sickness concerns;
- Finances and gift giving;
- Too much downtime and not knowing what to do with it;
- Missing your friends and/or family, feeling lonely.



What lots of people call "the holiday blues" can actually encompass a whole range of emotions, like anger, stress, and social anxiety. Here are a few ways you can try to deal with each of them.

ANGER



Walk away from the situation; Sometimes it's best to walk away and take time to calm down before addressing the situation.



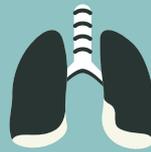
Identify your warning signs & triggers. Ask yourself, "What am I thinking or feeling?" "What made me angry?"



Get those emotions out in a positive way by doing some exercise or movement, like going for a run.



Get support. In a conflict with a family member for example, ask someone else to help you get some distance or mediate the conflict.



Try breathing or mindfulness exercises, like mindful breathing or yoga;



Switch your thinking. Instead of expecting an argument with a relative for example, prepare and visualize a positive interaction instead.



Identify your warning signs & triggers. Ask yourself, "What am I thinking or feeling?" "What made me stressed?"



Get those emotions out in a positive way by doing a calming activity, like going for a walk or yoga.

STRESS



Switch your thinking and be realistic. The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like when you were a kid. Set your intention to enjoy the holidays as much as you can.



Sleep can help keep stress in check. Avoid screens, snacks and too much excitement 1-2 hours before bed.

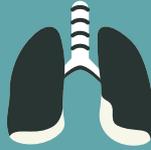


Talk it out with someone. Sometimes we need help from others, and that's okay.

SOCIAL ANXIETY



Identify your warning signs & triggers. Ask yourself, "What am I thinking or feeling?" "What made me anxious?"



Slow things down with breathing exercises or mindfulness activities, like counting down from 5 while taking deep breaths.



Start with small, realistic goals. Avoid forcing yourself into situations where you don't feel safe. Start small, like small get-togethers with friends or family.



Plan your escape and recovery time. Decide in advance what you will do if you feel overwhelmed or uncomfortable. (ex: I'll go to the bathroom since no one would question it and take deep breaths.)



Talk it out with someone. Asking for help/support is a strength, not a weakness. Reach out & talk to people you trust.



Be kind to yourself! Your body gives you signs when something is up and hints when you need a little love. Be a friend to yourself. Try positive affirmations and engage in self-care strategies

5-STEP APPROACH TO UNDERSTAND YOUR EMOTIONS

1

Identify the problem.
Notice what makes you feel that way and why.

2

Think about solutions.
Think about how you might react - what can you do? What are your options?

3

Consider the consequences.
Think about what might happen from the reactions you came up with at No. 2.

4

Make a decision.
Choose one of the things you could do - pick the one that you think is best. By the time you decide, you might be calmer.

5

Check your progress.
After you've acted and the situation is over, think about how it went.

Respect Your Needs

The holidays are often accompanied by a long list of obligations, errands and events. While these can be fun, they can also be exhausting and draining. It's important for you to know when to say "enough" or "no." Small, successful outings are much better than over-extending yourself. You can set boundaries around how much time you spend on holiday tasks like gift shopping. Don't forget to take breaks and recharge. Going with one or two friends may also provide support and make the outing a fun activity.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

If the holidays can attest to anything, it's that sometimes, the people that it is the most difficult to set boundaries with are the people to whom you are the closest to. But that doesn't mean that those lines are any less important to maintain. Boundaries are key to respect in any relationship, and need to be upheld to make sure you enjoy your winter break.

It always helps to be able to name what kind of boundaries they are to know how to maintain them. Here are a few examples:

Physical boundaries:
your personal space, touch, and physical needs
(ex: "I'm not a big hugger, I prefer handshakes.")

Emotional boundaries:
your feelings and emotional energy
(ex: "I'm not in a place to take in all this information right now. Could we talk about this later?")

Time boundaries:
your time, at work, at school, at home, etc.
(ex: "I can come over, but I need to be home by 10 o'clock.")

Intellectual boundaries:
your thoughts, ideas, and curiosity
(ex: "I know we disagree, but I won't let you belittle me like that.")



AVOID ISOLATION



You might be expecting, preparing, or dreading to experience loneliness during the holidays, and you are not alone. It's natural to feel lonely when away from friends or when either you or loved ones are out of town.

It's also common for people to feel emotional distance from the people they're with, which can result in feeling lonely even when in a room full of people. For those who feel a sense of loneliness, holidays can be a time of additional stress.

Solitude can sometimes be a good opportunity to connect with yourself, and can be something to embrace. But it can also be really distressing when it becomes isolation. Here are a few things to try in order to avoid feelings of intense loneliness and isolation during the holidays:

- Make plans with friends or family ahead of time;
- Phone, video call, or text a friend or relative;
- Play games virtually with someone;
- Be around people: they don't need to be people you know, but even taking a walk or visiting a museum can help ease feelings of loneliness;
- Connect with yourself in a mindful way;
- Get involved in your community - whether by volunteering locally or connecting online;
- Cultivate an attitude of gratitude: make a concerted effort to focus on the love and connections you do have;
- Make a list of things that bring you joy;
- Remember: loneliness is a feeling, not a fact, it's temporary!

GIVING MEANS YOU TOO!

While the holidays are an excellent opportunity to look outward and appreciate the people in your life, don't forget to appreciate yourself.

Amid holiday shopping and gift giving, perhaps you can buy or make a present for future you — maybe something that will support your mental health or encourage a new and healthy hobby! Consider mailing yourself a card - think of an encouraging phrase or write a note reminding you of a special time. Send these thoughts to your future self.



During a time as overwhelming as the holidays, it can also help to go back to the basics of self-care: Make sure you're still getting enough sleep even though you might be able to stay up later. Keep yourself well fed with a balanced diet, and take time to do things that bring you comfort and joy.

More than anything, make of the holidays what they mean to you! The holidays don't need to be your most wonderful time of the year, especially if you don't celebrate anything in particular. Focus on your needs this season.





TOOLS & RESOURCES



COPING STRATEGIES

POSITIVE COPING

Positive coping strategies help to restore emotional balance and/or feel better about yourself. They're respectful of you, others, and property, and help you solve the problem.

EX: Writing in a journal; Meditating or prayer; Talking to someone about what you're experiencing; Writing out what is within your control VS what isn't.

NEUTRAL/TIME-OUT

These strategies are neither positive or negative but can cause problems if used in excess.

Neutral strategies act as a time-out to help calm you and restore emotional balance. They should be seen as temporary strategies that should be used with a positive one.

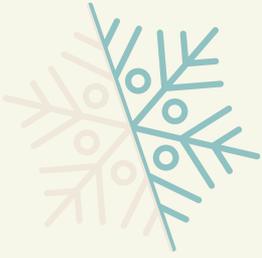
EX: Walking away from the situations; taking a hot bath; distracting yourself by reading a book, watching TV, playing a game, etc.

NEGATIVE COPING

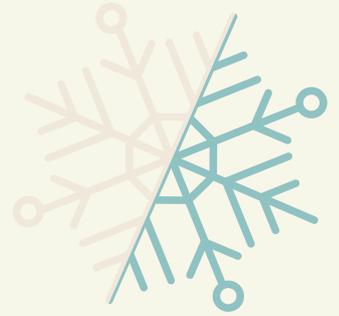
Negative coping strategies are not helpful strategies. They do not restore emotional balance, and may incite strong emotions (ex. anger). They are also often harmful to you, others & property. They do very little to solve the problem you're facing - in fact, they're more likely to create new problems.

EX: Throwing things; yelling, or swearing; breaking things; Using drugs or/and alcohol; getting into a fight.





ANXIETY ICEBERG



The TIP of the iceberg:

What others see - The behaviors and more obvious signs of anxiety.

Lack of focus
Sleep issues
Irritability
On edge
Overplanning
Distance

HIDDEN beneath the surface:

What others don't see - The less obvious signs and feelings related to anxiety.

Negative Thoughts
Ashamed
Embarrassed
Sensory Overload
Tired
Uncomfortable
Lonely
Guilt
Insecure
Overwhelmed
Stressed
Confused
Rejected



GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

5-STEP MINDFULNESS

5

Things I can see...

4

Things I can touch...

3

Things I can hear...

2

Things I can smell...

1

Thing I can taste...

GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

TRIANGLE BREATHING

Starting at the left bottom of the triangle. Trace your finger up the side while you take a deep breath in. Hold your breath for three seconds as you slide down the other side. Breathe out along the bottom of the triangle. Repeat it until you are calm.

Breathe in for 3

Hold for 3

**Start
here**

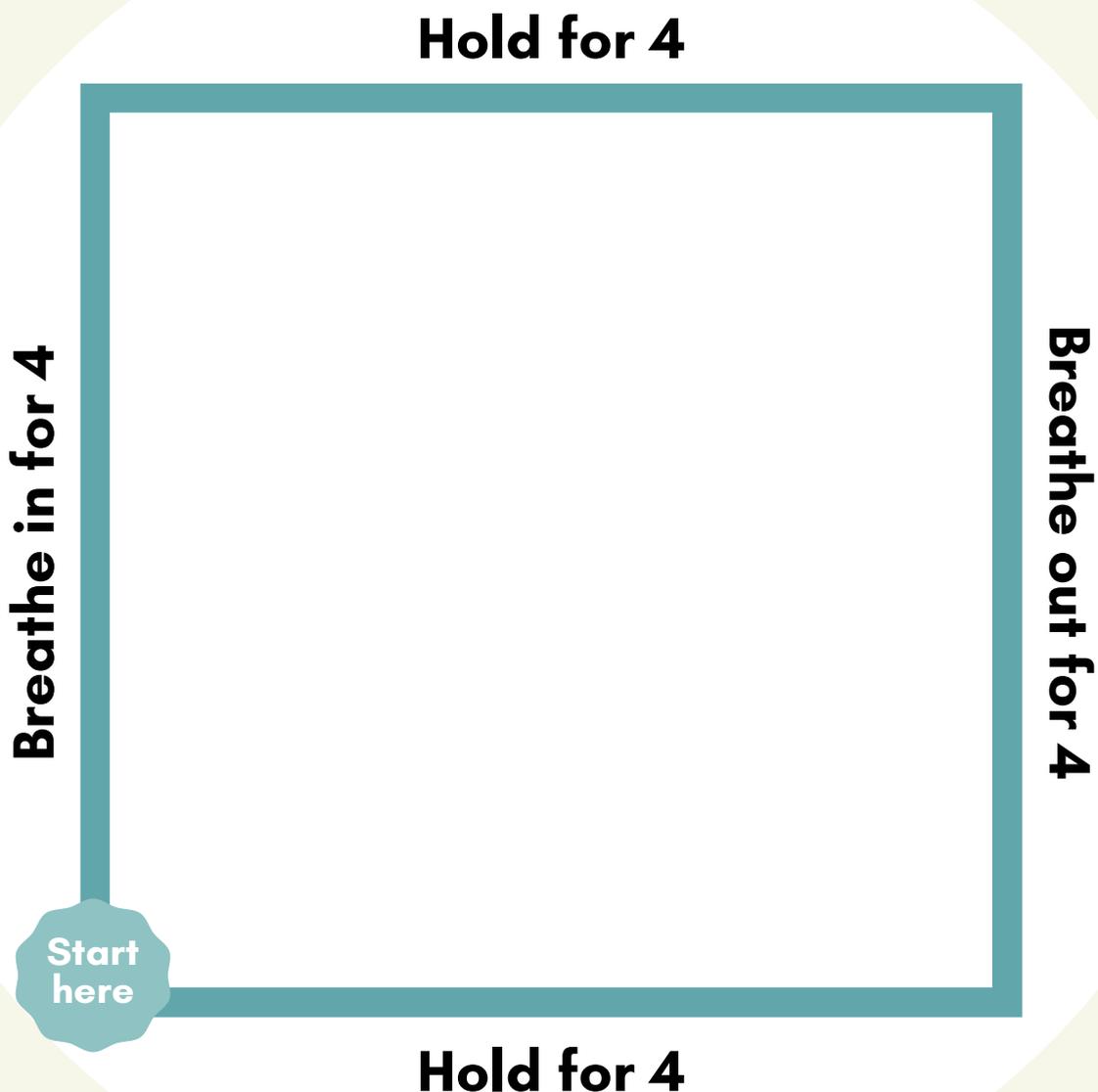
Breathe out for 3



GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

SQUARE BREATHING

Start at the bottom left of the square. Trace your finger up the side, while you take a deep breath in. Hold your breath for four seconds as you trace the second side. Breathe out as you slide down the other side. Hold your breath for four seconds, as you trace the bottom of the square.



SHIFTING YOUR MINDSET



NAME IT: What are your thoughts, feelings and behaviors right now?

LABEL IT: Is this thought true, helpful, inspiring, necessary, or kind?

SUBSTITUTE IT:



CONTROL OR CAN'T?

What I can't control:

Other people's opinions, values and beliefs

What other people think or say

Other people's feelings

Other people's actions and reactions

My choices

My thoughts

How I treat myself and others

My boundaries

My behavior

My effort

What I can control:

My attitude

My actions and reactions

Asking for help

My opinions, values and beliefs

How to express myself

The weather

Other people's motives

Other people's mistakes

The past and the future

What happens around you



CONTROL OR CAN'T?

What I can't control:



What I can control:



MAKE YOUR OWN SELF-CARE KIT



Find a box or a bag and add these items in it to create your own self-care reminder kit - Bonus points if you take the time to decorate your container!

Stress ball - To let out your emotions in a positive way.

String - To remember we're all connected. You're not alone.

Hershey's hugs - For when you need a hug.

Candle - There's always light even in your darkest times.

Bell - To reconnect to the present moment (here & now).

Eraser - To remind you it's okay to make mistakes.

Lifesaver - To remind you it's okay to ask for help.

Playdough - To remind you to be flexible when things get tough.

Gift - To remember a special memory or gift from a loved one.

Paper snowflake - To remind you that everyone is unique and has their own journey.

Post-its - To feel connected to others through positive messages.