

WINTER WELLNESS

To many, the holiday season is a time for peace, celebration, reconnection and nurturing our bonds with family and community. For our service members and veterans, the holiday season can bring additional challenges that impact their mental wellness. All of us are subjected to certain stressors and pressures during this time. It can be the stress of getting everything on that special someone's list without breaking the bank, or it can be planning an elaborate family gathering, or it can be the stress of just maintaining the energy to be present and enjoy the time that we have together. For our veterans, who are subject to increased mental distress from trauma, grief, or the difficulties of reintegrating into civilian life, these challenges can be tenfold. This holiday season be sure to prioritize not only your own mental wellness, but the wellness of those of us who are more vulnerable. By promoting an air of healing and reassurance we can ensure that all of our community members can be supported during the time of year where they may need it the most.



Tips for De-Stressing this Holiday

For some, the financial, social, and energy expectations of the holiday season can trigger an acute fight or flight response in the brain. Below are some mindful tips on how to navigate through these challenges while prioritizing your health.



Try and keep a schedule where time is partitioned out for food preparation, gift shopping/wrapping, and socializing. But do not overcommit to holiday tasks. Be self aware of what is practical in the time you are allotted.



While many of us use social media to express ourselves, during the holiday season it can be mentally exhausting as often we compare ourselves and our holiday experience to others. Please consider taking a step back this month, for the sake of your peace and your sleep schedule.



Please make sure that you are eating enough meals and they are balanced. In addition be sure to get a enough rest. The average necessary amount of sleep needed for healthy adults is seven hours per 24 hour cycle.



Be sure to connect with others this holiday. Humans are social creatures and creating/reinforcing the bonds between us can be therapeutic. It can also be nice to not rely solely on yourself when doing holiday planning. Maybe involve someone in your celebrations who has no network for themselves and pass on some holiday cheer.



It is okay to say no to engagements and set boundaries. Being a little bit selfish is healthy. You deserve time for yourself this holiday. Be sure to implement work life balance and utilize the your vacation days as your responsibilities allow. Prioritize self-care this holiday season. If you want to sit on your couch and watch football instead of going to that ornament exchange for the seventh year in a row, then do that, It's valid and healthy. You and your time to yourself matters.



RESOURCES

Space-A Travel: The financial pressure of holiday travel this season can be immense. Service members and veterans may qualify for Military Airlift Command flights for free or at reduced cost. To learn more about the program visit:

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/space-a-travel/>

Hot topics: The current political climate can cause a lot of friction within our families and networks and be difficult to navigate with tact. For information on how to avoid a dramatic holiday dinner please visit: https://www.hprc-online.org/sites/default/files/document/HPRC_Tips_for_Hot_Button_Conversations_031623_508.pdf

Managing Stress and Worry:

Cohen Veterans Network offers a free online education module on how best manage your stressors. Learn more here:

<https://www.cohenveteransnetwork.org/tools-for-stress-and-worry/>

Alcoholism: According to research, Veterans are at increased risk for alcohol abuse. Own Your Limits offers support for service members who want to control their alcohol consumption.

<https://www.ownyourlimits.org>

Reduce Spending: The holidays can put substantial pressure on our wallets. For tips on how to curb expenditures so you don't break the bank, Military One Source has you covered:

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/personal-finance/tips-for-savvy-holiday-spending/>

If you are struggling mentally or emotionally HELP IS AVAILABLE.

Please dial the Veterans Crisis Line at:

988 (Available 24 hours, in both English and Spanish.)

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