

The Holidays and COVID-19

Coping with Stress



Learning Objectives

You will learn:

- To understand ways stress may affect your overall health and wellbeing.
- To define your holiday expectations.
- New skills and tools to manage stress and maintain wellness during holiday times.
- Where to go for help, support and resources.



The Basics of Stress

What is stress?

Stress is a **normal reaction** the body has to any change that requires an adjustment or response.

The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental and emotional responses.

What is stress response?

A normal response to the demands and changes of life – both positive and negative

- An individual response
- A physiological response
- A response that is necessary for survival

The Effects of Stress

The effects of stress are experienced in the following ways:

- *Physical*
- *Mental*
- *Emotional*
- *Behavioral*

STRESS SYMPTOMS



Lack of concentration



Nervousness or anxiety



Increased anger or aggression



Irritability



Sadness



Tense of aching muscles
Headache
Rapid heartbeat
Sleep disturbances

Causes of Stress

- General stress
- Holiday stress
- COVID-19 stress
- Pandemic fatigue



Impact of COVID-19

- Unexpected
- Threatened our lives and the lives of our family members
- Created fear and a sense of helplessness
- Changed our societal norms and world views
- Created a need to balance activities with associated risks
- Economic/financial impacts
- Facing great adversity
- Missed life events
- Competing directives for information
- Continuation of pandemic

Holiday Expectations vs. Realities

- A time of celebration
- Normally involves family traditions and get-togethers
- Triggers natural emotional responses
 - *Childhood memories*
 - *Remembering the good times*
 - *May feel a sense of loss of family or togetherness*
 - *Miss participating in the holiday routines*
 - *Social isolation, grief and loneliness*



Holiday Blues

- May be a result of separation and COVID-19
- Emotions can become magnified
 - *Sense of loss*
 - *Anxiety*
 - *Sleeplessness*
 - *Discontent*
 - *Depression*
 - *Anger*
 - *Irritability*
 - *Thoughts of suicide*



Ways to Reduce Holiday Stress

- Be realistic
- Plan ahead
- Surround yourself with support
- Use self-care strategies



Be Realistic

- Accept this holiday season may be different
- Acknowledge your feelings
- Try developing new traditions
- Prepare yourself for the post-holiday let-down



Plan Ahead for the Holidays

- Keep a positive attitude – realize you have a choice
- Create a budget and stick to it
- Prioritize things you need/ want to do
- Take breaks; “mental health minutes”
- Don’t abandon healthy habits
- Don’t lose sight of what really counts
- Pace yourself



Surround Yourself With Support

- Reach out/rely on others
- Families come in all shapes and sizes
- Accept imperfection
- Respond with kindness
- Share goodness/volunteer
- Plan to attend/help organize holiday events for when safe/possible
- Visit friends or family
- Ask for help



Self-Care for Holiday Stress

- Relaxation exercises
- Meditation and mindfulness
- Guided imagery and visualization
- Music, reading
- Positive self-talk
- Allow yourself to have feelings



Additional Strategies

- Find ways to have fun
- Decorate
- Develop new traditions/
try new hobbies
- Family time
- Resiliency
- Set goals
- Fill your spiritual self



Children and the Holidays

- Plan ahead
- Set a calm example
- Importance of routines
- Don't over schedule
- Watch what they are eating



Children and the Holidays

- Get them moving
- Make sure they get enough rest
- Remind your child what the holidays are really all about
- Don't promise things you cannot do
- Let kids be honest about their feelings



COVID-19 Considerations

- Assess the risks
- Know current travel restrictions
- Have a clear plan
- Ask the questions
- Remember, you're doing this out of love



Alternate Ways to Celebrate

- Virtual holiday ideas
- Cheery holiday playlists
- Make small gifts to send by mail
- Dramatic holiday reading
- Outdoor holiday ideas
- Give to charities



When to Seek Help

How do I know if I need help?

- Seek help if symptoms are impacting your work, relationships or daily routine.

Where can I get help?

- Primary Care Manager (PCM), psychiatrist
- Therapist – go to www.tricare-west.com to find a local provider or call TRICARE Customer Service at 1-844-866-WEST (1-844-866-9378)
- MHS Nurse Advice Line – 1-800-TRICARE (1-800-874-2273), option 1
- Military OneSource – go to www.militaryonesource.com or call 1-800-342-9647
- Coast Guard Support – go to: www.cgsuprt.com or call 1-855-CG SUPRT (1-855-247-8778)
- Suicide Prevention Line – 1-800-273-8255
- **Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room**

Disease Management Programs

Two Ways to Self-Nominate

- Call 1-844-732-2436 from 8 am–6 pm local time Monday through Friday.
- Click on the link in the Class Resources section to go directly to the [Disease Management Program Information and Nomination page](#), and use the self-nomination form at the bottom of the page.



[Disease Management Education Center](#)

Programs include: anxiety, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, coronary artery disease, depression, diabetes, heart failure

Resources

Handouts

- Effects of Stress on the Body
- Relaxation Response Technique
- Stress Management Tips

Web Resources

- [https://www.mamafearless.com/10-ideas-for-christmas-during-social-distancing/#10 Ideas for Christmas During Social Distancing](https://www.mamafearless.com/10-ideas-for-christmas-during-social-distancing/#10_Ideas_for_Christmas_During_Social_Distancing)
- <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Holiday-Mental-Health-Tips.aspx>
- [TRICARE -- Coronavirus Guidance](#)
- [Stress - Mental Health America](#)

Accessing Health Net Federal Services Health and Wellness programs and resources
www.tricare-west.com > *Beneficiary* > *Health and Wellness Center* > *Learning Center*

Conclusion

- Thank you!
- [Class Evaluation](#)



Presentation References

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/basics/stress-basics/hlv-20049495>
- <https://ldi.upenn.edu/healthpolicysense/responding-trauma-covid-19>
- <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Parenting-in-a-Pandemic.aspx>
- <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience>
- <https://www.virginpulse.com/blog-post/5-tips-to-stay-connected-while-practicing-social-distancing-during-coronavirus-covid-19/#>
- <https://www.umms.org/coronavirus/what-to-know/prevention-safety/staying-in/staying-connected>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-use-positive-self-talk-for-stress-relief-3144816>