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Community Health Coalition, Inc.



Healthy People
2030

Improving the health of Durham
& NC communities since 1989

Managing Mental Stress & Substance Use During the Holidays

December 2020

Mental Health



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While the holidays are often considered “The Most Wonderful Time of The Year,” for many the holidays can be stressful and overwhelming. This holiday season, like most of 2020, promises to be like no other as we continue to be amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Rates of anxiety and depression are on the rise during the pandemic according to recent research studies. And according to Dr. Anderson-Brown “It is more important than ever that we learn how to identify

and manage how we are feeling and be intentional about taking care of ourselves and our loved ones. During this season, it is important to have a gratitude mindset, set realistic expectations, and practice self-care. Avoiding excessive spending, making time for one’s self, staying virtually connected with loved ones and focusing on the true meaning of the holiday season can also be helpful. Identifying the warning signs of holiday stress and depression early is important so that professional help can be sought when needed.”



Tedra Anderson-Brown, MD
Behavioral Health Medical
Director, BCBSNC

Holiday Stress and Depression Warning Signs

- Feeling Sad, Irritable, Anxious or Empty
- Hopelessness
- Loss of Interest in Activities
- Poor Concentration
- Sleeping too Much or too Little
- Crying Spells
- Thought of Suicide and/or Making Attempts to Harm Oneself
- Excessive Drinking

6 tips
for good mental
health during the
holiday season

1. Get enough sleep
2. Don't take on too much
3. Everything in moderation
4. Don't isolate yourself
5. Perform an act of kindness
6. Plan gifts earlier

holiday_blog.jpg

Self-Care and Coping Strategies to Manage Stress & Depression

- Exercising
- Eating Healthy
- Getting Rest
- Meditating
- Spending Time Safely with Loved Ones (Virtually)
- Seeking Treatment is not a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of strength.



Carol Gibbs, MD
Managing Partner, Sr. Health &
Edu. Partners, PLLC

Substance Use

People struggling with substance addiction may find it even more challenging to deal with during the holiday season. The exposure to temptations is often increased with holiday celebrations and with more opportunities to socialize, which can be a trigger for many people. Dr. Carol Gibbs states, “ **It is not uncommon for people to feel like they can take a ‘holiday’ from relapse prevention measures they have in place because they think this is the only way they will be able to enjoy celebrating with family and friends.**”

Tips for Dealing with Substance Use During this Holiday Season

1. Plan. Schedule meetings and make sure you have support people in place to hold you accountable.
2. Limit your time at celebrations especially during this COVID-19 Pandemic.
3. Limit your media exposure, as advertisements for alcohol tend to be more frequent during the holidays.
4. Know when to get help. Have phone numbers at your fingertips to call for help.

ABCs of Managing Mental Stress and Substance Use

Always exercise regularly as this may help in minimizing stress.

Be willing to seek professional help, and

Control substance use, stress, and anxiety by talking to someone, breathing deeply, laughing, and meditating.

For More Information and Help

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**
- Text “**TALK**” to **741741**
- Alliance Behavioral Healthcare Access Center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days at week. **Call 800-510-9132**
- Have Support Come to You. **Call Freedom House Recovery Center at 919-797-1865**
- Go to a Crisis Center. **A Walk-in Service at Freedom House Recovery Center, 309 Crutchfield St. Durham, NC**

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