

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Coping with Stress During the Holidays

Coldwater, MI. Christmas has just passed us in a blur and the New Year will be here before we know it. Holiday joy and cheer fill homes this season, but not everyone is getting the warm fuzzies from their friends and family. Entertaining traveling guests for days at a time, putting on parties, finding and wrapping the perfect gifts make for some stress filled situations. The holidays are an emotional time and when we are stressed to the max, sometimes it is hard to take a step back to regroup. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to share a few tips with you to help keep the holiday blues at bay.

1. **Be realistic.** If you have to say no to going to a friend's holiday party, or just cannot handle hosting the family get-together this year, don't feel guilty. Letting other people's priorities dominate your schedule can leave you feeling pressured and/or resentful. Consider doing what is most important to you so that you can make the memories that you will cherish for years to come.
2. **Stick to a budget.** Since Christmas has passed, some of us are feeling some of the financial burden of the gift giving and party hosting. Look at your finances before the New Year, and don't buy the dress you have been eying (even if it is on sale) -- or offer to bring the main dish to your co-workers dinner party if you cannot afford it. You will be glad you exercised restraint when the Christmas credit card slips start arriving in January.

3. **Don't abandon healthy habits.** The holidays can become a free-for-all when it comes to food and drink. It is unrealistic to start a weight loss diet at this time of the year, but it is important to not overindulge. This will only add to your stress and feeling of guilt. Eat a healthy snack before any parties that you may be attending so you are less likely to overeat and drink when you get there. Be sure to continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.
4. **Be careful about your alcohol consumption.** Alcohol is also a known depressant. Over-indulging in too much alcohol can quickly turn your gay mood dark, as well as result in bad choices with very negative consequences. Alcohol consumption has been identified as a major contributor to both car accidents and incidents of domestic violence. So if you are going to drink, do so responsibly. Don't drink and drive. Always include someone in your group who will serve as a designated driver. Limit your intake to a safe level - only two drinks per day for men and one drink for women. Don't let your holiday cheers turn into regrets – remember moderation in all things!
5. **Take a breather.** Being around all of your friends and family is always fun, but taking just 15 minutes to clear your head will refresh you enough to handle the cooking and cleaning and entertaining that you have to do. Take a walk, close your bedroom door, listen to soothing music – taking a moment free of distractions can help restore your inner calm in the midst of chaos.
6. **Reach out.** If you are feeling sad because you cannot be with family or have recently lost a loved one, seek out community religious or social events. It is OK to feel sad, and no one expects you to always be happy just because it is the holiday season. Take time to cry and express your feelings if you need to. Volunteering your time is a good way to lift your spirits.
7. **Seek professional help if you need it.** Sometimes it isn't just the holiday blues. Depression is a clinical disorder. If you are feeling persistently sad and anxious, having sleepless nights, feeling irritable, hopeless and are plagued by physical complaints, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional about your options.

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Take these tips to keep stress in check and the holiday blues away. Enjoy the time that you have to spend with your friends and family. For more healthful tips, visit our website at www.bhsj.org or visit one of our three locations.

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Everyone at the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency would like to extend to you and your loved ones wishes for a very Happy and Healthy New Year!

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