

WELLNESS MINUTE

December 2023



**NURTURING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH:
COPING STRATEGIES FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON**

ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

**MINDFULNESS MEDITATION FOR STRESS RELIEF
DURING THE HOLIDAYS**

NURTURING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH: COPING STRATEGIES FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The holiday season can be a time of joy, celebration, and connection with loved ones. However, it can also bring its share of stress, anxiety, and overwhelm, especially for those who may be dealing with mental health challenges. It's important to prioritize your mental health during this time and have coping strategies in place to manage stress and protect your well-being. In this article, we'll share some tips and coping strategies to help you nurture your mental health during the holiday season, along with reputable sources for further information.

COPING STRATEGIES FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON:

- **PRACTICE SELF-CARE:** Taking care of yourself is crucial for maintaining good mental health. Make sure to prioritize self-care activities that help you relax and recharge, such as getting enough sleep, eating nutritious meals, staying physically active, and engaging in activities that bring you joy and fulfillment. Set boundaries and learn to say no to excessive commitments to avoid feeling overwhelmed. (Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness)
- **SEEK SUPPORT:** Don't be afraid to reach out for support when you need it. Talk to trusted friends, family members, or a mental health professional about your feelings and concerns. Surrounding yourself with a supportive network can help you feel heard, understood, and less alone during the holiday season. You can also consider joining support groups or seeking online resources for additional support. (Source: American Psychological Association)
- **PRACTICE STRESS-RELIEF TECHNIQUES:** The holiday season can bring about stress and anxiety. Practice stress-relief techniques that work for you, such as deep breathing, mindfulness, meditation, or yoga. These techniques can help you relax, manage stress, and promote mental well-being. Make time for regular self-care practices to prioritize your mental health. (Source: Mayo Clinic)
- **MANAGE EXPECTATIONS:** The holiday season can come with high expectations, but it's important to remember that perfection is not the goal. Manage your expectations and be realistic about what you can and cannot do. It's okay to set boundaries and prioritize your own well-being. Let go of perfectionism and focus on what truly matters to you during the holiday season. (Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
- **PRACTICE GRATITUDE:** Cultivating an attitude of gratitude can help shift your focus from stress and worries to the positives in your life. Take time to reflect on the things you are grateful for, whether it's big or small. You can keep a gratitude journal, express gratitude to others, or simply take a moment to appreciate the present moment. Practicing gratitude can help improve your mental well-being and foster a positive mindset. (Source: Harvard Health Publishing)

Taking care of your mental health during the holiday season is important for your overall well-being. By practicing self-care, seeking support, practicing stress-relief techniques, managing expectations, and cultivating gratitude, you can nurture your mental health and cope with the challenges that may arise during this time. Remember, it's okay to prioritize your mental health and take steps to protect your well-being during the holiday season.



ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA: BREAKING THE SILENCE AND SEEKING HELP

Mental health stigma is a pervasive issue that often prevents individuals from seeking the help they need. Overcoming stigma and breaking the silence surrounding mental health is crucial for individuals to feel supported and empowered in seeking help without fear of judgment or discrimination.

Stigma associated with mental health challenges can manifest in various ways, such as societal discrimination, self-stigmatization, and lack of access to adequate mental health care. This stigma can result in individuals feeling ashamed, isolated, and reluctant to seek support, which can have detrimental effects on their mental health and overall well-being.

It is important to understand that mental health conditions are medical conditions that require proper diagnosis, treatment, and support. Seeking help for mental health concerns is a brave and proactive step towards self-care and well-being. Here are some key strategies for addressing mental health stigma and seeking help:

- **EDUCATE YOURSELF:** Educate yourself about mental health conditions, their prevalence, causes, and treatments. Reliable sources such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) provide valuable information to help dispel myths and misconceptions about mental health.
- **PROMOTE OPEN DIALOGUE:** Engage in open and non-judgmental conversations about mental health with loved ones, friends, and colleagues. Creating a safe and supportive environment for discussing mental health can encourage others to share their experiences and seek help without fear of stigma.
- **SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP:** If you are struggling with mental health challenges, do not hesitate to seek professional help. Mental health professionals, such as therapists, counselors, and psychiatrists, are trained to provide support, guidance, and evidence-based treatments to individuals dealing with mental health concerns.
- **ADVOCATE FOR MENTAL HEALTH:** Advocate for mental health awareness, destigmatization, and access to mental health care in your community. Participate in mental health advocacy campaigns, support mental health organizations, and share resources to spread awareness and promote acceptance.
- **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF:** Practice self-care and prioritize your mental health. Engage in self-care activities such as exercise, mindfulness, and healthy coping strategies to manage stress and maintain emotional well-being.

Breaking the silence around mental health and seeking help is a courageous step towards self-care and well-being. Remember, you are not alone, and there are resources available to support you on your mental health journey. Together, we can work towards creating a more accepting and supportive environment for those dealing with mental health challenges.

Sources:

National Alliance on Mental Illness. (n.d.). Mental health stigma. Retrieved from <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Stigma>

National Institute of Mental Health. (n.d.). Mental health information. Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/index.shtml>



COMFORTING WINTER RECIPES FOR EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

The winter season can bring about a range of emotions, from cozy warmth to chilly blues. During this time, it's important to take care of your emotional well-being, and one way to do so is through nourishing comfort foods. By indulging in delicious and nutritious winter recipes, you can provide yourself with comfort and support for your emotional health. Here are some comforting winter recipes that can help boost your emotional wellness, along with their sources for inspiration.

HEARTY VEGETABLE STEW: A warm and hearty vegetable stew is perfect for the winter season. Packed with nutrient-rich vegetables like carrots, celery, and potatoes, this dish can provide you with the vitamins and minerals your body needs to stay healthy during the colder months. Plus, the slow simmering of the stew can create a cozy aroma that fills your home and brings a sense of comfort.

CREAMY BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP: Butternut squash is a winter staple that can be turned into a creamy and velvety soup that warms both your body and soul. This comforting soup is rich in fiber, antioxidants, and vitamin A, which can support your immune system and overall well-being. It's a perfect dish to enjoy on a cold winter day.

BAKED APPLE CRISP: Winter is the season for apples, and a warm and fragrant baked apple crisp can be a delightful treat for your emotional wellness. Made with fresh apples, oats, and warm spices like cinnamon and nutmeg, this dessert can provide you with a sense of comfort and indulgence. It's a perfect dish to enjoy as a comforting dessert or a special treat during the winter season.

GOLDEN TURMERIC LATTE: Turmeric is a warm and aromatic spice known for its anti-inflammatory properties. A golden turmeric latte made with almond milk, ginger, and a hint of sweetness can be a comforting and nourishing beverage during the winter season. It's a perfect drink to cozy up with and enjoy as a soothing treat for emotional well-being.

ROASTED WINTER VEGETABLES: Roasted winter vegetables, such as Brussels sprouts, carrots, and parsnips, can make a delicious and nutritious side dish for your winter meals. Roasting vegetables can bring out their natural sweetness and create a comforting and satisfying dish that nourishes your body and soul.

Remember, taking care of your emotional well-being is important, especially during the winter season when emotions can be heightened. By incorporating comforting winter recipes into your diet, you can provide yourself with nourishing and delicious meals that support your emotional wellness. Enjoy these comforting winter recipes and take care of yourself this season!

Sources:

- EatingWell. (n.d.). Hearty Vegetable Stew. Retrieved from <https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/250628/hearty-vegetable-stew/>
- Minimalist Baker. (n.d.). Simple Butternut Squash Soup. Retrieved from <https://minimalistbaker.com/simple-butternut-squash-soup/>
- Allrecipes. (n.d.). Ultimate Apple Crisp. Retrieved from <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/229088/ultimate-apple-crisp/>
- Minimalist Baker. (n.d.). Golden Milk Latte. Retrieved from <https://minimalistbaker.com/golden-milk-latte/>
- Cookie and Kate. (n.d.). Roasted Winter Vegetables Recipe. Retrieved from <https://cookieandkate.com/roasted-winter-vegetables-recipe/>

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION FOR STRESS RELIEF DURING THE HOLIDAYS

The holiday season can be a time of joy, but it can also be accompanied by stress, anxiety, and overwhelm. Mindfulness meditation is a powerful practice that can help you manage stress and cultivate a sense of calm during the busy holiday season. Incorporating mindfulness into your daily routine can be a valuable tool for enhancing your mental well-being and enjoying the holiday season to the fullest.

What is mindfulness meditation? It is a form of meditation that involves paying attention to the present moment with curiosity, non-judgment, and acceptance. By practicing mindfulness, you can become more aware of your thoughts, emotions, and sensations, and develop a greater sense of clarity and calm. Mindfulness meditation can be done anywhere, at any time, and does not require any special equipment or prior experience.

Here are some ways in which mindfulness meditation can help you manage stress during the holidays:

- **Cultivating Awareness:** Mindfulness meditation helps you become more aware of your thoughts, emotions, and sensations, without judgment or attachment. This awareness allows you to identify stress triggers and respond to them with clarity and calmness, rather than reacting impulsively or being overwhelmed.
- **Reducing Rumination:** Rumination, or repetitive negative thinking, can contribute to stress and anxiety. Mindfulness meditation helps you observe your thoughts without getting entangled in them, allowing you to let go of unhelpful thoughts and redirect your focus to the present moment.
- **Enhancing Relaxation Response:** Mindfulness meditation activates the relaxation response in the body, which counteracts the stress response. This can result in reduced heart rate, blood pressure, and muscle tension, promoting relaxation and calmness during the holiday season.
- **Managing Emotions:** The holiday season can bring up a range of emotions, from joy and excitement to sadness and loneliness. Mindfulness meditation helps you develop emotional resilience by allowing you to acknowledge and accept your emotions without judgment, and respond to them in a skillful manner.
- **Cultivating Gratitude:** Mindfulness meditation can also help you cultivate a sense of gratitude, which is associated with improved mental well-being. Being present in the moment and noticing the small joys and blessings around you can help shift your focus from stress to gratitude, enhancing your overall holiday experience.

Sources:

Mayo Clinic. (2021). Mindfulness exercises. Retrieved from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/mindfulness-exercises/art-20046356>

Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley. (n.d.). Mindfulness. Retrieved from <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness>

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. (2016). 5 things you should know about meditation for health. Retrieved from <https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/tips/things-to-know-about-meditation-for-health>



Your EAP Can Help

Anxiety • Stress • Depression • Financial Matters
Legal Concerns • Parenting Support • Coping with Grief
Trauma • Family Challenges • Substance Use

Toll-free: 800-324-4327

Español: 800-324-2490

Online: www.4eap.com

No cost & confidential

Crisis Counseling 24/7



**SEASONAL
AFFECTIVE
DISORDER**
AWARENESS MONTH
DECEMBER