

Holiday Blues: Your Mental Health Matters

AultCare Wellness

What is Anxiety?

- **Anxiety** - the apprehensive anticipation of future danger or misfortune accompanied by a feeling of worry, distress, and/or somatic symptoms of tension. The focus of anticipated danger may be internal or external.
- When you experience an internal fear.
- Can present as dizziness, muscle tension or pain, restlessness, sleeplessness, trouble focusing, racing heartbeat, fast breathing, shaking or trembling, stomachache, diarrhea, loss of energy or appetite, sweating, cold, sweaty hands, chest pain, and/or dry mouth.



What is Depression?

- **Depression** - feeling of being intensely sad, miserable, and/or hopeless. Some describe an absence of feelings and /or dysphoria: difficulty recovering from such mood: pessimism about the future: pervasive shame and/or guilt: feelings of inferior self-worth: and thoughts of suicide or suicidal behavior.
- When you experience a low mood for an extended period.
- Can cause trouble with mental tasks such as remembering, concentrating, or making decisions, make you feel nervous and jumpy, cause trouble sleeping, or you may sleep too much, change your appetite, cause headaches, stomachaches, or other aches and pains, drain your body of energy, may cause feelings of helplessness or hopelessness.

What is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)?

- **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)** - a type of depression that's related to changes in seasons.
- SAD usually begins and ends at about the same times every year. Most people with SAD, symptoms start in the fall and continue into the winter months, sapping your energy and making you feel moody. These symptoms often resolve during the spring and summer months. Less often, SAD causes depression in the spring or early summer and resolves during the fall or winter months.



Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) *continued*

- During periods individuals are experiencing SAD any or all the following may occur
- Feeling listless, sad or down most of the day, losing interest in activities you once enjoyed, having low energy and feeling sluggish, having problems with sleeping too much, experiencing carbohydrate cravings, overeating and weight gain, having difficulty concentrating, feeling hopeless, worthless or guilty, having thoughts of not wanting to live.



What is Stress?

- **Stress** - the pattern of specific and nonspecific responses a person makes to stimulus events that disturb his or her equilibrium and tax or exceed his or her ability to cope.
- When you experience internal or external stressors
- Blood pressure may rise, heart may pound, muscles may tighten, stomach may become tense, concentration may get worse, forgetfulness may get worse.



NAMI Statistics

In 2014, NAMI reported **64%** of people with mental illness say the holidays make their conditions worse.

A newer survey completed in 2021 showed that **3 in 5 Americans** feel their mental health is negatively impacted by the holidays.

Holiday Impact on Mental Health

- Increased financial burden due to travel, gift, and/or hosting costs.
- Increased physical and mental demands. A packed calendar of parties, performances and traveling that can be difficult to balance with everyday responsibilities and self-care.
- Expectation to give perfect gifts and plan perfect events as well as the increased commercialization of the holidays.
- Dealing with loneliness for those who aren't with loved ones, or the emptiness of loved ones who have passed.
- Seasonal changes including decreased exposure to sunlight and the over-emphasis of the "end of the year."

American Psychiatric Association

According to a 2017 survey, both men and women are noted to experience significant stress increase during the holiday.

44% of women and 31% of men report an increase in stress during the holidays.



Self Care Strategies

- **Manage your finances.** Avoid overspending. Set a limit and stick to it.
- **Know your limits.** Do not overbook yourself. Say no when you need to.
- **Make selfcare a priority.** Meditation and exercise are great to combat depression, anxiety, and stress.



Self Care Strategies *continued*

- **Spend time in fresh air and sunlight whenever possible.** There are numerous studies supporting a short walk outside can decrease a multitude of symptoms related to your mental health including symptoms of SAD.
- **Set reasonable expectations for yourself and others.** Be mindful of your expectation of yourself and others. This can be an overwhelming time for everyone
- **Find ways to give back.** Donating time, money, food, or even used items can give you a sense of meaning and purpose for the holiday.

Self Care Strategies *continued*

- **Avoid drug or alcohol as a coping mechanism.** There is a **20%** overlap between people with anxiety or mood disorders and substance use disorders, and substances can exacerbate symptoms.
- **Avoid triggers.** Don't participate if it brings you sadness. Make new fulfilling memories.



Self Care and Self Love for the Holidays

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)
- Stress



Sources

American Psychiatric Association (APA)

American Psychiatric Association. (2022). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed., text rev.)

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Mayo Clinic

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Quiz Link:

<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sv/7HIGouV>