

DEALING WITH HOLIDAY STRESS & DEPRESSION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Learn ways to prevent and manage emotions that the holiday season may trigger.
- Recognize your triggers so you can combat them before they lead to a meltdown.
- Become familiar with the FREE resources available to you to help cope with depression.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your health. Being realistic, planning ahead and seeking support can help ward off stress and depression.



INTRODUCTION

While we all wish a Happy Holiday Season for every employee & their family members, we know that sometimes the season can instead bring stress & feelings of sadness & unhappiness for many of us. Try to **prevent stress and depression** in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past. We also acknowledge that the nearly 3-year pandemic may have impacted some employees' mental health. Know that there are ways to prevent & manage challenging emotions should you start to experience them.

HELPFUL TIPS TO PREVENT & MANAGE HOLIDAY STRESS & DEPRESSION



ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR FEELINGS. If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness & grief and that your feelings are valid. **It's okay to not be okay**; take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season and that's quite alright.

REACH OUT. If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out a good friend or consider using Job Options' Employee Assistance Program (see back page) & seek **free counseling**. Having someone to talk to about the emotions that the holiday season may be triggering can most certainly help you get through a difficult period. Push yourself out of your comfort zone & seek companionship or professional help—do not isolate—instead, reach out & talk with someone.



BE REALISTIC. The holidays aren't always picture perfect as you see on TV. **Reality is that most people have a much different experience than what is shown in holiday movies & commercials.** No, not everyone has warm & cozy family gatherings or attends fancy holiday parties, or has the finances to be able to go hog-wild & shop 'til they drop for loads of gifts to place under the tree. Reality for the majority of people is far from that! These unrealistic depictions may trigger feelings of sadness & loneliness.

If you don't have family or friends to enjoy the holiday with or the money to make all the purchases you would like to, you may feel as though you're the only one. Remember that this isn't true & reality is that there are many others that are in the same place as you. **It's okay.** Be realistic about your circumstances & focus on the things that you *do* have in your life. **Treat yourself well** & take pleasure in creating moments of joy that bring peace to you.





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DON'T ABANDON HEALTHY HABITS. Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Over-indulgence only adds to your stress & guilt. **It's been said that the average person gains 5-10 pounds between Thanksgiving and Christmas—try not to be part of that statistic.**

- Try sticking to a routine to keep you focused & at ease as you continue to abide by CDC recommendations to prevent exposure to the COVID-19 virus.
- Get plenty of sleep! Sleep re-energizes your body & mind.
- Instead of reaching for dessert after dinner, incorporate regular physical activity—a digestive lap around the neighborhood to view holiday decorations is a great first step.



TAKE A BREATH. Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing & restoring inner calm. Focus on the things that bring you joy, however small.

SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP IF YOU NEED IT

Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable & hopeless, & unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, **call JOI's Employee Assistance Programs (EAP).**

Call **1-855-786-0274** United Workers Wellness benefit or **1-800-342-8111** for **Aetna**. Remember that this service is **FREE** for you & your family members living in your household and available 24/7.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------|
| 1. Calling the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) costs money. | True | False |
| 2. Over-indulging during the holidays tends to lower holiday stress and guilt. | True | False |
| 3. What we see on TV in movies and commercials is typical of how everyone enjoys and spends the holidays. | True | False |
| 4. Holidays are always stressful and there is absolutely nothing you can do to avoid the stress. | True | False |

Name: _____

Date: _____