



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Saskatoon
Mental health for all

COVID-19 has affected us all in many ways. Physical distancing has become necessary to prevent the spread of the virus, but it also makes human connection more challenging. It's no surprise that many of our friends and family need support to gain strength and reduce stress.

With the holiday season around the corner, here are some tips to help support ourselves and our loved ones who may be struggling at this time of year.

Acknowledge your feelings

If you have lost a loved one or you can't be with your loved ones for other reasons such as Covid-19, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's okay and healthy to 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 is okay.

Reach out

If you feel lonely or isolated, connect with community, religious or other social events. Even though you may not be able to attend these in person, many have websites, online support groups or virtual events. They can offer support and companionship. If you're feeling stressed during the holidays, it also may help to talk to a friend or family member about your concerns through text, a phone call, physically distanced visit or a video chat. Volunteering your time or doing something to help others is also a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships. For example, consider dropping off a meal at a friend's home during the holidays.

Set aside differences

Families can be complicated. Accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. Try to be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes wrong, as they may be struggling too. Take time to feel grateful for what you have, and reflect on the positive relationships you have developed over time. Doing this helps protect and nourish mental and physical well-being, which in turn can also help improve the well-being of our loved ones.

Be realistic

The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. Chances are, this holiday season is going to look quite different due to Covid-19, so our traditions and rituals may need to change. If possible, choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children or other relatives can't come to your home, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos. Send out real cards to let people know you're thinking about them. Or meet virtually on a video call. Another great idea is to go for a physically-distanced walk outdoors with family and friends. Even though your holiday plans may look different this year, you can find ways to celebrate and enjoy the season.

Plan ahead

Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, connecting with friends and other activities. Consider whether you can shop online for any of your items. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That will help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for meal prep and cleanup.

Learn to say no

Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say no, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.

Don't abandon healthy habits

Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to stress. Some suggestions include getting plenty of sleep, including regular physical activity in your daily routine, trying deep-breathing exercises, meditation or yoga, and avoiding excessive tobacco, alcohol and drug use. Try to adjust the amount of time you spend reading news and social media, as this can also cause an increase in stress and depression.

Take a breather

Make some time for yourself. Find an activity you enjoy or take a break by 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 and restoring inner calm. Some options may include taking a walk at night and stargazing, listening to soothing music, or reading a book.

Knowing when something is wrong - Getting help

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 and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor, mental health professional, or call us at (306) 384-9333.

For many, the holidays can be a time of sadness, grief, stress and loneliness. Unfortunately, when there are additional barriers to in-person socialization, feelings of both exclusion and loneliness can be intensified. These feelings can play havoc with emotional and physical well-being. If you are concerned about yourself or your loved ones' wellbeing, getting help early is an important part of treating illness. Reach out today!