

City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program

Managing Stress During The Holidays

Self-care

During the holidays people may ask a lot of things of you. There are endless expectations and in the spirit of the season you might feel obligated. You may be asked to help buy a present, organize a charitable event, or pick up an individual from the airport.

During the holidays, it is very easy to forget to prioritize your own mental health over the things that other individuals ask of you.

You're likely to feel worn out if you go from one obligation straight to another. For instance, are you going from party to party, baking to Christmas shopping, and then up the next morning to do it again? Plan time for YOU!

- Try leaving parties early so that you can get some time to unwind with a book or TV show before going to bed.
- Schedule a portion of each day for what you want to do versus your obligations. Put down the holiday to-do list, sit back and listen to your own mind and body for what it needs.

Finances

Budgeting during the holidays can feel overwhelming and stressful. Set a holiday budget that is reasonable and stick with it.

- Take a look at your current funds and what you can expect to make before the end of the year. How much are you realistically willing to take out of that? That will be your total budget.
- Break up your budget into four areas:

food, presents, decorations and travel. A budget broken down into smaller parts will feel more manageable.

Anxiety

Individuals with social anxiety may find holiday parties and get togethers hard. A remedy to anxiety is increasing one's sense of control. Pre-plan and rehearse social events by having small talk topics at the ready:

- Books you've read
- Movies/shows you've watched
- Favorite holiday memories/activities
- The last thing that made you laugh
- Something new or interesting you learned/discovered recently

Supports

Make a list of all the people you can rely on. Put your names into three groups: those you can call to cheer up, those you can call for a quick vent, and those you feel comfortable calling in a real state of emergency. It's okay if some names overlap. Planning ahead and being prepared to use your supports will make it easier when you're stressed and need them.

Sunlight

Increasing sunlight can boost your overall mood. Sunlight triggers the release of serotonin, a hormone associated with happiness. Get outside during the middle of the day when the sun is brightest, work near windows and turn on those bright lights.

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City of Milwaukee EAP

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The Power of Holiday Traditions

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the phrase *holiday traditions*? Do certain foods, people and activities come to mind?

Traditions are “rituals” or celebrations that both **strengthen bonds** between family and friends and act as an **anti-dote to anxiety**. It anchors us in what is familiar and predictable, while providing a sense of belonging and unity.

Engaging in positive traditions is a great way to cope with holiday stress. Not sure where to begin?

- Expand on things you already do
- Decide who will be involved
- Put it on your calendar
- Start planning and delegating

- Think about what the new tradition is intended to do (its goal)

Tradition Ideas

- Play tourist in your own town
- Make a holiday ornament
- Watch the same holiday movie
- Build a gingerbread house
- Start a holiday jigsaw puzzle
- Hold a gift exchange
- Wear an “ugly sweater”
- Start a cookie exchange
- Start a charity box/jar
- Build a snowman

Grief & Loss

Grief can be challenging anytime during the year.

However, coping with loss during the holidays may be especially hard when expected to be in good cheer and hopefulness.

Seek support: These supports may be informal (e.g. friends/loved ones) or formal (e.g. mental health counselor, medical provider).

Honor your loved one: Do something that allows you to remember your loved one in a positive way. Some ideas include: lighting a candle, making a memorial wreath, a donation in their memory, or hanging a stocking and inviting others to put notes inside.

Communicate your needs: Let others know what would be helpful to you and what isn't.

Help others/volunteer: Look for opportunities to share your time, skills and talents. Helping others boosts our own mood.

Make a Plan A & B: Anticipate triggers and challenging scenarios. Think through what and who could help.

Set limits on socializing: Check-in with your self during social gatherings. Its okay to politely decline invitations, attend only part of a function or leave an event early.

Build-in time for self-care: The holidays can be very busy. Regularly schedule time to engage in an enjoyable activity for yourself.

EAP Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to assist employees who develop behavioral/emotional problems that may directly affect their work performance, and to provide Key Personnel with policy and procedural guidelines for the management of these problems.

City of Milwaukee Wellness Resources

- For information about current Wellness programs and services, visit: www.milwaukee.gov/WYCM
- The City's Workplace Clinic provides free, convenient, onsite and virtual health care services for employees and spouses regardless of enrollment in the City's health insurance and dependents (18 mos and older) on the City's health insurance. Call 414-777-3413 to schedule an in-person or virtual visit.
- The City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program web page houses topical information and resources on a wide range of work-life issues. Visit: <https://city.milwaukee.gov/DER/EAP>
- The City of Milwaukee offers a free Care.com membership through Care@Work to employees. A Care.com membership provides unlimited access to a platform employees can use to find and manage care for children, seniors, pets and their home. Visit www.milwaukee.gov/careatwork to learn more.