

When the season doesn't feel calm or bright

Tips for Managing Your Mental Health During the Holidays

Did the “most wonderful time of the year” turn into the most stressful time of the year?

Of all the things on your holiday preparation to-do list, the most critical one is maintaining your mental health and practicing self-care. **Here are 10 practical ways to protect yourself leading into a busy season:**

- 1 Stay in therapy.** If you can, keep your scheduled therapy sessions to ensure that you have built-in time to explore anything that comes up.
- 2 Stay hydrated.** Drink plenty of water. Hydration nourishes the brain and can improve your overall mood.
- 3 Spend time with loved ones.** Social interaction can help lessen the feelings of loneliness that may come around this time of year.
- 4 Find time to decompress.** Make sure you're taking the time to recharge and use your best coping skills. Pay attention to the practices that make you feel your best.
- 5 Remember that it's okay to feel the way you feel.** It's healthy to acknowledge your feelings and work through them, rather than suppressing them.
- 6 Don't feel pressured to uphold family traditions.** While they might be a comforting way to remember a loved one, sometimes family traditions are too painful to bear. Your family will find new ways to celebrate, and your traditions will adjust with time.
- 7 Come up with a plan.** What good are the holidays if you don't have the energy to enjoy them? Make a list, check it twice, and decide if there's anything you can remove.
- 8 Find the best time to shop.** Malls are less crowded on weekdays and weeknights. Practicing mindful activities while you wait in line can also help you stay calm among the holiday shopping chaos.
- 9 Be kind to yourself.** All you can do is your best, and your best is good enough. It's impossible to please everyone, but we are often our own harshest critics.
- 10 Remember that the NAMI HelpLine is available.** Our volunteers are ready to take your call, text, or chat to connect you with helpful resources during the holiday season and beyond. You are not alone.

If you or someone you know needs help facing the challenges of mental illness, the NAMI HelpLine is available Monday through Friday, 10:00 am–10:00 pm, ET. Call **1-800-950-NAMI (6264)**, text “**HelpLine**” to **62640**, or chat with us at **nami.org/help**.

In a crisis, call or text **988** or chat at **988lifeline.org**.