

Community Institute for Psychotherapy

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2021-2022 News & Notes



December 2022 - CIP News and Notes

Making Holidays Bright

By Robin Joy Berenson, PhD, LMFT

Holidays from work and school, out of town visitors or visits, social events, special holiday preparations and rituals make December a time of excitement and expectation. It can also leave us vulnerable to stress, and physical and mental lows. Taking time to consider the balance between the ordinary and extraordinary can make the difference.

Minimize disruptions by maintaining regular routines as much as possible: Special treats, activities, and time away from school are part of the excitement of the season, but can lead to over-stimulation. Keeping as much as possible to normal bed times, meal times, and a healthy diet is especially important for children. For adults, keeping up with exercise routines can also help lower stress.

Plan ahead to avoid over-scheduling: We may want to be everywhere and do everything during this short time. But trying to do too much can lead to burnout and exhaustion. Be realistic when making holiday plans.

Practice good communication skills: Check in ahead of time with family and friends. Confirm plans and preparations to avoid misunderstandings. Practice active listening and be ready to compromise when conflict occurs.

Be patient with yourself and others: Focus on the positive and not what is missing, wrong, or not meeting expectations. Take time out for yourself so you can be at your best.

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Take a step back to reconsider: Holiday traditions and rituals have a way of overtaking our lives. Don't be afraid to alter or do away with observances that no longer fit your or your family's needs and resources. Find new ways to celebrate who you are today.

Reach out if you need help: Low mood and depression are common at this time of year. NAMI California urges those facing mental health challenges, *“Find support. Whether it's with friends, family, a counselor or a support group, airing out and talking can help. Consider attending a free support group provided by your local NAMI California affiliate.”*¹

Acknowledge your feelings. The Mayo Clinic advises: *“If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones for other reasons, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.”*²

¹<https://namica.org/blog/handling-stress-during-the-holiday-season/> “Maintaining Mental Health During the Holiday Season”

²<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20047544> “Stress, depression and the holidays: Tips for coping”