

“Coping with the Holidays”

Although for many the holidays can represent warm and happy memories and good interactions with family members, for others they bring up feelings of sadness, anger, guilt, ambivalence, resentment and other similar emotions. Yet another group of individuals experience mixed feelings and the holidays elicit both warm and happy feelings and also feelings of uneasiness.

For those who might be experiencing mixed feelings, it can be difficult to think about how things could be different. If you fall into this category you might find it hard to feel as if you are able to control what is happening. You also might feel as if you are not able to or do not want to feel the emotions that go along with not participating in family activities.

Below are a few things to keep in mind when considering the holidays and strategies to help you manage your mood:

- ✓ Set realistic expectations. Consider other holidays and predict how things might play out.
- ✓ Have a safety plan. Predict what might happen and think of ways to manage your feelings. Maybe make a date with a friend. Plan to take breaks, such as, collecting yourself in a quiet room or volunteering to go to the store to pick up an item.
- ✓ If the holidays involve sad memories, consider changing the holiday in some way. Consider making a new tradition or changing the structure of how things are done. This might be met with resistance but maybe you can come up with a compromise that fits everyone's needs.
- ✓ Bring things with you that make you feel safe or happy. This might be pictures or favorite pajamas. Consider reaching out to friends or others while home.
- ✓ If you think someone might ask you questions that you might not want to answer, consider preparing by thinking of potential questions and what your answers might be. Think about what you want others to know and what you want to keep private. This way there is less of a chance of you disclosing more than you desire.
- ✓ Eating is a large part of holidays and can often be difficult for those who struggle with disordered eating or who “emotionally eat.” If you are concerned with eating during the holidays, think about preparing a meal plan. If you have a therapist, this would be a good thing to create with him or her. If you are not in psychotherapy, think about your meals ahead of time and plan them out. Remember, that your stress during these times might be even higher than usual so it's best to prepare.

These are only a few things to consider. There are many things to consider when it comes to holidays. Just remember to be realistic, predict and plan.

If you would like to speak to someone to receive help with dealing with stress related to the holidays, call the Student Personal Counseling Center (SPCC) at 215-503-2817.

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