



By Mental Health First Aid USA on December 3, 2020



The holiday season is often a time of year for social activities, holiday shopping, and quality time with loved ones. This year, however, COVID-19 threatens to make those activities more difficult.

Keeping up with activities, staying positive and — especially in 2020 — safely socializing can be overwhelming.

In addition, [40% of U.S. adults](#) face a mental health or substance use challenge, making a complicated holiday season even more difficult time for many people. Regardless of whether you are living with a mental health challenge or know someone who is, you can take steps to prepare for the holidays and prioritize your mental health in the coming weeks.

Use these [tips](#) to get started:

1. **Manage your expectations.** Remember that this year is different and may not feel like the holiday season we are used to. Whether you are sharing a meal over Zoom or sending well wishes to family across the country, managing your expectations for yourself and others will help you stay positive. Give yourself and those around you some grace — none of us have been through a time like this before, and we're all trying to balance staying safe with feeling "normal."
2. **Pull back when you need to.** If, at any point, you feel overwhelmed or anxious, know that it's perfectly fine to take a step back. Healthy boundaries are necessary for your mental health. Practicing self-care can also help soothe feelings of anxiety or stress. Take a walk, watch a funny movie, or meditate.
3. **Reach out to loved ones.** In times like this, living in a digital age can feel like a saving grace. Stay connected with your loved ones via text, social media, video or phone. Make yourself available for those you cannot see in person and offer your support to loved ones who may be struggling — a simple text or email can make a difference.
4. **Monitor your moods.** The "holiday blues" are real, so it is important to stay in tune with how you're feeling. It can be easy to put others before yourself during the holiday season but remember that how you're feeling matters too. Practicing mindfulness, journaling, or even rating how you feel every day can help you better understand your emotions. Pay attention to what makes you happy and incorporate it into your daily life. And remember: It's OK to not be OK, and you're not alone.
5. **Ask for help.** If the holidays become more than you can handle, don't be afraid to reach out and ask for help. Talk to a loved one, trusted peer, or even your primary care physician about how you're feeling. If you notice a family member or loved one having a difficult time, encourage them to seek help too.

Even though this year's holiday season may not look like it has in the past, you can still make it special and comfortable by prioritizing your mental health and well-being. Take it one day at a time and [#BetheDifference](#) for yourself.

Have a wonderful holiday season this year with [Mental Health First Aid](#). Happy Holidays!

Share and help spread the word.