

# SEASON'S GREETINGS



## TIPS FOR COPING WITH THE HOLIDAYS

People with mental health conditions can have more difficulty with the unexpected and change in routine than do others, and they can sometimes experience holidays as negative events. Family members may struggle to balance the needs of their relative with a mental health condition with the desires of other relatives and friends.

Hectic schedules, numerous activities, large and frequent gatherings, high volume of noise and increased visual stimulation associated with joyous occasions can lead to feelings of confusion, anxiety, depression, reappearance of psychotic symptoms or unwelcome physical changes in eating, sleeping, energy level and daily functioning. Here are some tips for to help cope with this stressful and chaotic time.

- Stay close to family and friends who understand your condition.
- Take your medications as prescribed. Be sure to get the sleep you need.
- Celebrate the holidays in ways that are comfortable for you.
- The holiday season does not stop feelings of sadness and loneliness. Give yourself permission to work through these feelings.
- Don't compare this season with previous ones. Enjoy all the little things you have now.
- Talk about the stress you feel with family and friends.
- Keep expectations manageable. Plan your work and work your plan.
- Set a budget and stick with it. Many items that you can give do not cost money - a phone call to a friend may mean more.
- Do something nice for someone else. Do something nice for yourself.
- Stay out of department stores.
- Play your favorite non-holiday music.
- Celebrate the New Year in a way that is comfortable for you.
- Surround yourself with close friends who understand your feelings about the New Year.
- Reflect on positive memories from the past year and try to build on them.
- Don't allow yourself to dwell on the negative. If the negative thoughts come, acknowledge them and let them go. Return to a positive thought or memory. Don't beat yourself up for having a negative thought.

Remember that the holiday season does not magically banish all reasons for feeling sad and lonely; sometimes holidays can seem to magnify those feelings. It can be a little easier to get through the holidays when you look for things to appreciate and focus your thoughts on those positive things.

- Don't dwell on past losses.
- Do work through unresolved grief.
- Do remember that there will be a difference between the ideal holiday image and the reality of one's life. Try not to dwell on any disappointment you may experience.
- Don't accept the role of victim - get out of the house if you can and enjoy the sunshine (when you have it) and fresh air.
- Remember, celebrations are what you make of them - and make them comfortable for you. Create new (comfortable) memories.

