

# FESTIVE STRESS

**E**ver come back from vacation thinking, 'I need another vacation to recover from my *vacation*'? During the holidays, you may notice your stress edging upward and continue on that trajectory until after the New Year. Many Americans describe the holidays as "frantic", which makes sense when you consider all of the things that happen during this time of the year, as well as all the expectations that we heap on ourselves to make things "perfect".



This year, a global pandemic is creating additional challenges to some of our cherished and time-honored traditions. Here are some tips for taking care of yourself and others this holiday season:

## **Identify What You're Feeling.**

Most people are feeling a lot of different ways at once right now...this year has been a difficult year for many reasons. It is normal to feel more emotional than usual right now. You can sort things out by journaling, talking to a friend, or spending time alone thinking. Knowing what feelings you're experiencing is the key to making effective plans for coping.

## **Acknowledge Losses.**

If you're missing a loved one, think of ways to honor them in your plans. If you've lost a job or had to drop out of school, take the time to recognize the challenges that came with that. Even if you haven't lost anything concrete, we've all lost our sense of normalcy this year - it's okay to grieve that during this time.

## **Make The Best Of It.**

Things will be different this year, but holidays don't need to be canceled. We still carved pumpkins and made favorite Thanksgiving meals. We can still light the menorah, decorate gingerbread houses, and watch the ball drop in Times Square on New Year's Eve (don't quote us on that). Don't let disappointment take more than you've already had to sacrifice.

## **Remember The *Bad*Times?**

Sure holidays are full of excitement and joy, but they're full of high stress, long travel days, endless to-do lists, and dinners with uncles you never liked. You may be giving up some of your favorite things about the holidays, but you're probably leaving some stressors behind too. Don't distort the situation and make it seem worse than it really is.

## **Practice Gratitude.**

There is still plenty to be thankful for this year. Identify some things that you're grateful for - your health, a favorite song playing on the radio, indoor plumbing. Change is hard, but it isn't always bad. There are still ways to celebrate the season with your loved ones, even if you must give up some of your favorite traditions.

Questions? [363ISRW.ART.363ISRW@us.af.mil](mailto:363ISRW.ART.363ISRW@us.af.mil) or 757-764-9316