

Self-Compassion Strategies for the Holidays in 2020

Purpose: This was created to assist organizations and individuals in developing strategies for self-compassion and self-care during the holidays. The 2020 holiday season will be unlike any other before. Holiday stress and spending have always been challenging, but this year brings higher than usual stress levels, barriers around gatherings and lower than usual budgets. COVID-19 along with social and political unrest has many Americans reeling. In a typical year-holidays are often the most stressful time of the year. As many of us are struggling to get through each day, it may be helpful to create a plan to implement some of these habits during this unparalleled and unpredictable time.

Habits to practice this year

Acknowledge your feelings

Allow yourself to grieve. Give yourself permission to acknowledge the loss of normalcy, not being able to be around others, acceptance of financial and physical ramifications of this pandemic. Many of us are holding a lifespan of changed experience. This will forever be a part of our lives.

Stop romanticizing the holidays this year

"It's the most wonderful time of the year". This is inaccurate for many of us. If someone close to you has recently died, or you cannot be with loved ones, realize that it is normal to feel sadness and grief. For some the holidays are reminders of social isolation or family discord even during a normal year. It is healthy to take time to cry or express your feelings. You cannot force yourself to be happy just because it is the holiday season.

Reach Out

If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events, many of which may be accessed virtually. They can offer support and companionship. Leaning into trusted others is the most powerful way to feel better. If you may do so safely, volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.

TRAUMA-INFORMED, RESILIENCE-ORIENTED CARE

<p>Be realistic</p>	<p><i>The holidays do not have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children cannot come to your house, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails, or videos. Recognize what you have control over, and what you do not.</i></p>
<p>Set aside differences</p>	<p><i>Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they do not live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they are feeling the effects of this unpredictable time, holiday stress and depression. Recognize what boundaries are most effective for you right now, given your plate is already so full.</i></p>
<p>Stick to a budget</p>	<p><i>Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Do not try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts.</i></p> <p><i>Try these alternatives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Donate to a charity in someone's name.</i> ○ <i>Give homemade gifts.</i> ○ <i>Start a family gift exchange</i>
<p>Plan Ahead</p>	<p><i>Set aside specific days for virtual shopping, baking, virtually visiting friends, and other activities. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. This will help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. Plan your schedule recognizing that you may need to build in downtime more than usual.</i></p>
<p>Cope Ahead</p>	<p><i>Remember to take breaks, the harder and longer you push yourselves the less bandwidth and productive you will be. Normalize stretching, drinking plenty of water, go on a quick walk, or doing something else rejuvenating before you burn out. When you have something</i></p>

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	<p><i>planned that is going to cause increased stress or activity, plan a restorative activity that you enjoy before and afterwards.</i></p>
<p>Learn to say no</p>	<p><i>Saying “yes” when you should say “no” can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you cannot participate in every project or activity. Try to manage stress before it manages you. If it is not possible to say “no” try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.</i></p>
<p>Keep up the healthy habits</p>	<p><i>Do not let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt, and often can impact your overall health and wellness. Read your body – recognize your personal signs of stress and distress, examining your breath, heart rate, digestion, energy, focus and so on.</i></p> <p><i>Try these suggestions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Focus on healthy foods and limit high fat foods, sweets, cheese, or drinks.</i> ○ <i>Get plenty of sleep.</i> ○ <i>Incorporate regular physical activity into each day.</i>
<p>Take a breather</p>	<p><i>Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.</i></p> <p><i>Some options may include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Taking a walk at night and stargazing.</i> ○ <i>Listening to soothing music.</i> ○ <i>Reading a book</i> ○ <i>Taking a bath or warm shower with essential oils</i> ○ <i>Using technology apps to practice mindfulness</i>