

Navigating Stress and Depression During the Holidays

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A photograph of a chain-link fence with three white signs attached to it. The signs are placed in front of a backdrop of lush green trees and foliage. The ground in front of the fence is covered with small, dark, rounded stones. The signs are arranged horizontally and contain the following text: 'DON'T GIVE UP', 'YOU ARE NOT ALONE', and 'YOU MATTER'.

**DON'T
GIVE UP**

**YOU ARE
NOT ALONE**

**YOU
MATTER**

CHANGES IN STRESS LEVELS DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

% OF U.S. ADULTS COMPARING THEIR STRESS DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON WITH OTHER TIMES OF THE YEAR



Increases

41%

Stays the same

52%

Decreases

7%

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<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2023/11/holiday-season-stress>

What causes you
stress during the
holidays?

CAUSES OF STRESS DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON



Nearly nine in 10 U.S. adults say something causes them stress during the holiday season

89%

The 10 Most Commonly Reported Sources of Holiday Stress

Spending too much or not having enough money to spend

58%

Finding the right gifts

40%

Missing family or loved ones

38%

Having too much to do

32%

Feeling pressure to make the holidays special

30%

Food- or alcohol-related issues

25%

Not being able to spend time/be with family or loved ones

25%

Experiencing or anticipating family conflict

22%

Feeling left out or excluded

20%

Traveling

19%

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<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2023/11/holiday-season-stress>

Common sources of holiday stress



- ❧ **Expectations of positivity** (sometimes to the point of denying or ignoring what is hard in the world)
- ❧ **Expectations of family togetherness and harmony**
- ❧ **Loneliness** and social disconnection
- ❧ **Grief** for those who have died or for broken relationships
- ❧ **Seasonal forms of depression/mood issues**

Mental health challenges: **Inside-out** or **outside-in**?



Ten Ways
to Navigate the Holidays
*(while keeping your heart and
soul intact)*

1. Observe **Advent** before Christmas



*O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer
our Spirits by Thine Advent here.*

*Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight*

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

2. Embrace lament as well as celebration.



How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation
I will sing to the Lord
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

--Psalm 13:1-2, 5-6 (NRSV)

3. Acknowledge grief and loss (and find support)



“Worship on the Longest Night: A Service of Grief and Hope” is a contemplative service pointing to hope in the midst of sorrow and suffering.

Childcare is available for newborns through 4-years old.

For those who can't attend, we'll post a livestream feed here and on the Blacknall YouTube page the day of the event.

Posted in Church-Wide, Blacknall, Advent

4. Set value-based goals *and* value-based limits.



- ❧ What during the holidays are you most looking forward to? What is most meaningful to you?
- ❧ What are things that you especially want to experience and to do over the holidays?
- ❧ What amid the holiday “busyness” is less meaningful?

4. Set value-based goals *and* value-based limits.



Warren's list . . .

More meaningful	Less meaningful
Time with children	Holiday parties
Time with Susan	Christmas cards
Time with my parents	Receiving gifts
Time with Susan's parents	Shopping
Time to "be" rather than to do, in order to enter 2026 well	Decorating
Gathering for worship	More holiday parties

5. Remember that before all else, you are loved and known by God



“You hem me in, behind and before . . .” – *Ps. 139:5*

**It's good that you exist;
it's good that you are in
this world!**

--Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 164.

5. (Resist the idea that your value is found in production and consumption.)



“You hem me in, behind and before . . .” – *Ps. 139:5*

6. Connect with beauty



Photo by Ergita Sela on Unsplash

7. Care well for your body.



8. Be careful about alcohol



9. Nurture meaningful relationships



10. Accept the reality of change



10. Accept the **reality** of change

*Why lies he in such mean estate
where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading.*

*Raise, raise a song on high
The virgin sings her lullaby
Joy, joy for Christ is born
The Babe, the Son of Mary!*



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