Holiday emotional health and wellness

For many of us, the holidays bring with them feelings of stress, anxiety and sadness. With the global pandemic, these feelings can intensify. Although things may be different this year, the holidays are still about spending valuable time with family, friends and loved ones.

Here are some tips on how to maintain your emotional health and wellness during this holiday season:

- **Know before you go**—Advance planning can help reduce stress when traveling. Before you set off, check local requirements and restrictions that your destination might have. Maintain safe distances from others and wash your hands often to stay safe while you travel.
- **Try new traditions**—Think about hosting virtual celebrations, such as video calls to watch holiday movies, play games or open gifts with friends or family. Brainstorm with your family to find what works for you.
- **Celebrate within your means**—Decide on a budget you can afford. Make a list and double-check it to make sure you don't forget anything. If you plan to shop in person, confirm store hours and policies before you leave. Track your spending daily, and cut back on extras.
- **Find joy on your terms**—Do what matters most to you. Set realistic expectations and limits for yourself and others, and don't be afraid to say "no" when something is outside the boundaries you set.
- **Find your happiness**—Reduce your stress by planning your time wisely. Decide what works best for your mental health. Be sure to get enough rest, stick to exercise and eat healthy food.
- **Stay merry and bright**—Humor helps lighten the mood and put things in perspective. Sharing a laugh helps us connect and put aside our differences. Take a moment to look for funny things as you go through your day. It will help you relax and enjoy the holidays.
- **Manage seasonal sadness**—If you are sad or struggling around the holidays, be honest about it. It helps others understand what you're going through. You are not alone; there are many people who feel the same way. Be patient with and kind to yourself.

If holiday stress and anxiety start to have a negative impact on your quality of life, contact your mental health provider, primary care provider or health plan for support.