

'Tis The Holiday Season

MENTAL WELL-BEING

This year, many of us will approach the holidays as a time to be joyous and celebrate with family and friends. For others, the holidays are much darker, stressful, and challenging, a time of family conflict, financial strain, loneliness, grief, depression, and anxiety.

WHAT WE KNOW

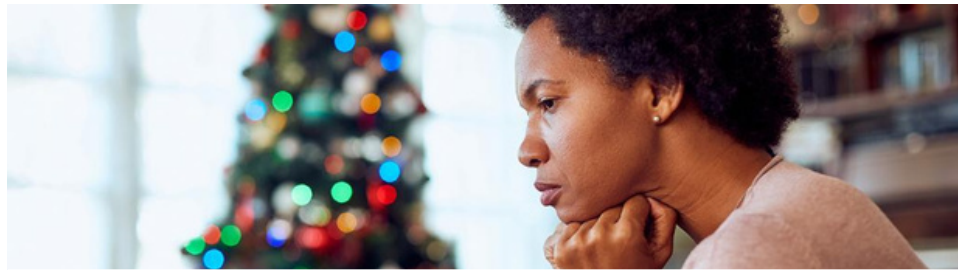
- December, January, and March are the most dangerous months of the year for alcohol and drug-related death. - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Sixty-four percent (64%) of people with mental illness report the holidays make their condition worse. - National Alliance on Mental Illness.

While public images show happy families gathering around the Christmas tree, eating turkey dinners, and enjoying holiday music by a cozy fire, it's no surprise that those people facing addiction and recovery have heightened feelings of stress, depression, and anxiety. High expectations of a good holiday, missing loved ones, and stress related to shopping and social events can contribute to the holiday blues, especially during the holiday season from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day. In most cases of the holiday blues, a person may experience feelings such as sadness, a sense of loss, loneliness, frustration, and lack of energy. Holiday blues, which typically go away after the holiday season, are different from diagnosed mental illness symptoms that last for more than two weeks.



WHAT YOU CAN DO to reduce stress, maintain good mental health, and beat back the holiday blues

- **Write A Gratitude List And Offer Thanks.**
- **Set Aside Time For Yourself And Prioritize Self-Care.**
- **Don't Be Afraid To Say No.** Your mental and physical well-being needs to come first.
- **Avoid Alcohol And Drugs.** Using alcohol and drugs does not reduce stress and can often make it worse.



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- **Eat Well.** Eating well can help stabilize your mood.
- **Volunteer.** The act of volunteering can provide a great source of comfort by helping others.
- **Keep It Up Or Seek Therapy.** If you're feeling overwhelmed, it may be time to speak with a mental health professional.

PRESCRIBED MEDICATIONS

Opioid misuse and overdoses continue to be at epidemic levels in the United States. Data indicates that opioid overdoses increased in South Carolina during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was likely due to increased anxiety, social isolation, and depression. In 2021, Just Plain Killers data report 1,733 opioid-related deaths, of which 126 involved heroin and 1,494 involving fentanyl. Additionally, data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health reveal (1) 9.3 million adults misused prescription painkillers, (2) 6.2 million adults misused a prescription tranquilizer or sedative and (3) 3.3 million adults misused a prescription stimulant.

WHAT WE KNOW

The holidays bring families, especially teenagers and young adults, to your household. We know that 3 million people over the age of 12 reported using cough and cold medications to get high. Most cases of dextromethorphan abuse called into poison control centers involved 15- and 16-year-olds. Because of the opioid epidemic in South Carolina, it is crucial to manage, store, and dispose of all prescribed and over-the-counter medications properly, especially during the holidays.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Check your medicine cabinet for expired prescriptions and medications no longer needed. Medications should be properly stored out of reach of pets, children, and vulnerable adults.
2. Properly dispose of expired, unwanted, or unused medicines through a Drug Take Back program or a local permanent drug drop box. The FDA recommends another option to safely dispose of medication at home: <https://youtu.be/2kAkIbIMi24>
3. REMEMBER to take medications as directed! The holidays are busy and sometimes may cause one to skip or forget to take or leave their medications at home. Take care of yourself!

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Hold Out the Lifeline: A Mission To Families





Each One Can Reach One

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