

The Holidays Can Be Extremely Stressful

WHAT WE KNOW:

A Google survey of more than 2,000 people conducted by the American Addiction Centers measured the emotional state of people during the holidays, found that over 84 percent of survey respondents were overwhelmingly or moderately stressed during the holidays. The data also revealed that 29 percent said they drank alcohol more during the holidays. Studies reveal that approximately 20 percent of addicted Americans also suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD and/or seasonal depression) or a milder seasonal mood disorder known as the “Winter Blues”.



FAST FACTS:

- Drug overdoses are the #1 cause of accidental death nationally and in South Carolina. According to the CDC, there were over 96,000 fatal drug overdoses from March 2020 to March 2021, up over 30 percent from 2019.
- South Carolina had one of the highest state increases, up over 60 percent from 2019. Synthetic opioids (fentanyl) accounted for over half of drug overdose deaths.
- In 2019, there was also a 46 percent increase in psychostimulants and a 38 percent increase in cocaine overdose deaths. White males between the ages of 35 and 44 were the most affected group. Overall, drug overdoses kill more Americans than breast cancer, guns, and car crashes combined and cost an estimated \$100 billion annually.
- In 2018, 47.6 million American adults aged 18 and older (19.1%) experienced a mental illness. In addition, 11.4 million adults (23.9%) had a severe mental illness and 3.5 million adolescents (14.4%) had a major depression episode. Each year, the economic costs of addiction amount to over \$740 billion.
- The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) reports that over 20 million Americans struggle with addiction, but only 1 in 10 who need addiction treatment ever receive it.



WHAT YOU CAN DO:

The most serious problems facing people who live with mental illness is stigma and discrimination. Stigma causes people to feel ashamed and blamed for something that is beyond their control and prevents people from making social interactions and seeking the help they need. Here are some things you can do if you or someone in your family is struggling with mental illness:



- Enjoy the holiday season, but if you or persons you know are overwhelmed by the stressors that the holidays bring, seek help from a mental health professional. It may save your life!
- Talk openly about mental health.
- Educate yourself and others about mental illness. Get trained as a mental health first aider (MHFA).
- Be conscious of your language and actions. Get trained as a community-based recovery support person
- Show compassion and support for those with mental illness.
- Choose positive reinforcement and empowerment over shame.
- Be a friend! It is one of the best ways you can help.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) assists someone experiencing a mental health or substance use-related crisis and connects the person with help. A public education program, the Mental Health First Aid course, introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of their impact, and overviews appropriate supports. Becoming a first aider does not prepare one to diagnose or provide any counseling or therapy. Instead, the program offers concrete tools and answers key questions like, “What do I do?” and, “Where can someone find help?” This program also teaches common risk factors and warning signs of specific illnesses like anxiety, depression, substance use, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, and schizophrenia.

Learn more at www.holdoutthelifeline.org/mental-health-first-aid



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