



Ways to Manage Your Mental Health During the Holidays

For a lot of people, holiday season merriment is usually eclipsed by stress, anxiety, and poor mental health. If this sounds like you, you are not alone in the love-hate relationship with the holiday season. The holidays set high-pressure expectations on people to celebrate in specific ways, to spend beyond their means, and to project happiness even if they are going through something difficult.

While bracing for impact is a decent strategy to safeguard your mental health during the festivities, you do not have to feel trapped in this limbo forever. There are ways to repair your relationship with the holidays.

Here are two reasons why you may get the holiday blues and what you can do to push through.

1. Let there be light.

We underestimate the value of sunlight exposure in our day-to-day mood and energy levels. For those of us celebrating Christmas and Thanksgiving during the colder, gloomier months, staying in a sunny mood can be hard.

If you find yourself low and lethargic during the holidays, a simple reason behind it could be a lack of sun exposure.

For some of us, the darkness-driven sadness can get worse and turn into seasonal depression or seasonal affective disorder (SAD). People with seasonal depression typically experience symptoms of depression such as sadness, low energy, and loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed. Some people may also experience changes in their appetite or weight, sleep problems, and feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness.

There are a couple of solutions to this problem:

- **Light Therapy.** Sunlight exposure is not under our control, but artificial light exposure is. Light therapy has shown promising results for alleviating symptoms of seasonal depression. Fight the urge to binge-watch Netflix all day in a dark room. Step outdoors, open the curtains, and ditch the mood lighting for a while.
- **Pharmacotherapy.** If things don't get better after you've tried everything else, try booking an appointment with a therapist to talk about medication. Certain types of medicines help manage the deficit of neurotransmitters like serotonin in your brain caused by low sunlight exposure (and other related causes.)

2. Plan the Partying

Obligations get the better of us during the festive season. Instead of doing what we really want during the holidays, we feel pressured to hang out with people that we might not otherwise choose to spend time with. We are exposed to addiction triggers and are sometimes forced to re-open chapters of our lives we thought we had left behind.

If we want to avoid a bumpy ride during the holidays, we must be prepared. A pre-holiday checklist could include the following things:

Declining events that you don't want to go to. Learn to say "no" to parties that have alcohol and drugs if you have a substance problem. Instead, consider hosting a cozy dinner party. If spending the holidays with your family is bad for your mental health, stick to a video call instead. Spend holidays with people you love or even alone, doing something you want to do. Remember, there is no right way to celebrate.

Setting a budget. When the festive spirit takes over, logic takes a nosedive while prices (and your generosity) spike. Planning your expenses ahead of time with a trusted person will help you manage your money during the most expensive time of the year.

Asking for help. Talking to a therapist before and after the holidays can be life-changing for people who equate the holidays with grief, anxiety, and/or emotional flashbacks. Therapy can help break your negative association with the holidays, allowing you to form new memories that you can cherish and revisit.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Your Medical Plan

The CommunityCare Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides a confidential assessment and referral for you and your family, whether the problem is related to family, marital, relationships, separation, divorce, drugs, alcohol, mental, emotional, financial, or other areas causing concern.

To use the EAP, call (918) 594-5232 or 800-221-3976 to arrange a free initial assessment interview. Business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., on weekdays. An EAP specialist is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for emergencies.





What is Tulsa Spirit

Did you know there is a special committee called Tulsa Spirit that's dedicated to keeping you informed about work-related news and events? The purpose of the Tulsa Spirit committee is to improve and increase interaction among employees, provide a variety of employee activities, and help recognize employees for the work they do for the City of Tulsa.

Tulsa Spirit Committee meets monthly to report on and plan for Spirit fundraising activities that help make employee events possible throughout the year.

Spirit Ambassadors also serve on the following sub-committees: Compassion/Recognition/Rewards, community events like participating in annual parades, and Special Events for families like our recent City of Tulsa Employee Zoo Day, and the City of Tulsa Health and Wellness Fair.

Tulsa Spirit is also about employees connecting and making a difference in our daily work. If you're interested in volunteering with Tulsa Spirit or need more information about an upcoming event, please email, spirit@cityoftulsa.org.

2023 Tulsa Spirit Ambassadors*

Name	Department	Phone	Email
Sherron Wilson	Asset Management	596- 2853	SRwilson@cityoftulsa.org
Michelle Hanson	City Auditing	596-7844	mhanson@cityoftulsa.org
Leah Mueller	Communications	596-7803	lmueller@cityoftulsa.org
Kennedy Lyons	Customer Care Center	576-5256	kennedylyons@cityoftulsa.org
Clara Ponce, Events Committee Co-Chair	Development Services	596-9343	cponce@cityoftulsa.org
Monica Galchik	Engineering Services	596-9508	mgalchik@cityoftulsa.org
Andrea Alexander	Finance	596-7509	aalexander@cityoftulsa.org
Marlowe Dean	Fire	596-1735	mdean@cityoftulsa.org
Anna Spyles	Fire	596-9441	aspyles@cityoftulsa.org
Ethan Forman	Human Resources	576-5598	eforman@cityoftulsa.org
Donna Colbert	Information Technology	596-1826	dcolbert@cityoftulsa.org
Paige Broyles	Legal	576-5422	pbroyles@cityoftulsa.org
Jennifer Betancourt, Spirit Treasurer	Mayor's Office	596-7700	jbetancourt@cityoftulsa.org
Janell Braden	Municipal Court	596-7763	ibraden@cityoftulsa.org
Anna Moore, Spirit President-Elect /	Parks and Recreation	596-1444	amoore@cityoftulsa.org

Compassion, Rewards, & Recognition Sub-Committee Chair			
Chloe Williams, Spirit President	Police	596-9377	chloewilliams@cityoftulsa.org
Ofc. Demita Kinard, Events Committee Co-Chair	Police	596-9191	dkinard@cityoftulsa.org
Lehaim Escoto-Flores	Streets and Stormwater	596-9466	lescoto-flores@cityoftulsa.org
Gueren White, Health & Wellness Sub Committee Co-Chair	Water and Sewer	596-9844	gwhite@cityoftulsa.org
Alisia Meyers	Working in Neighborhoods	596-9336	amyers@cityoftulsa.org

Help Recruit Officers for Tulsa Police, Get a \$1,000 Bonus

A new incentive is now being offered to full-time* City of Tulsa employees to help recruit more officers for the Tulsa Police Department. The concept is simple. Recruit qualified candidates and receive a \$1,000 bonus per potential recruit once the candidate is successfully hired as a police officer.

Potential recruits should list the City employee's name and department as a referral at their initial interview, testing, and academy orientation. **This is the only way City employees will be able to receive the bonus.** Employees will be contacted by Tulsa Police Recruiting when their potential candidate starts the academy. For more information, email Tulsa Police Recruiting at jointpd@cityoftulsa.org, or call (918) 591-4500.

*Human Resources and some non-sworn positions at the Tulsa Police Department do not qualify for the stipend.





Holiday Safety Tips: The 12 Days of Safety

The holidays are a joyful time to spend with family and friends, but a careless mistake could damper your festivities. Here are 12 safety tips to keep in mind this holiday season.

1. Never leave a burning candle unattended

On the first day of safety, we remind you to extinguish any lit candles when you leave the room, your house, or go to sleep. According to an NFPA study, candles start more than half of all home decoration structure fires, most of which occur in December.

2. Turn off tree lights, decorations, and portable space heaters when away or asleep

Did you know that local fire departments respond to more than 500,000 fires involving heating equipment and more than 700 caused by decorations each year? Be sure to unplug all your lights, decorations, and portable space heaters when not in the same room.

3. Never throw wrapping paper in the fire

Remember, to never toss wrapping paper into the fireplace. Doing so could result in a flash fire because wrapping paper can ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

4. Only use outdoor and indoor lights as indicated on their packaging

We remind you to only use lights tested for safety by a nationally recognized testing laboratory. Lights for both indoor and outdoor usage must meet different standards that testing laboratories can verify. Before using, be sure to check each set of lights -whether new or old – for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Throw out damaged sets and do not use electric lights on a metallic tree. Check outdoor lights for labels showing the lights have been certified for outdoor use, and only plug them into a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI)-protected receptacle or a portable GFCI.

5. Don't overload circuits, extension cords, or electrical sockets

Overloading circuits, extension cords, or electrical sockets could cause a fire. Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.

6. Never leave cooking or baking unattended



Most people don't realize that cooking fires are the number one cause of home fires and that, as reported by the NFPA, unattended cooking equipment is a factor in one-third of reported home cooking fires and half of the associated deaths. Be especially careful when you're using the stove or cooktop and while frying foods. Always stay in the kitchen – even if you're baking or roasting – and set a timer to remind yourself to check on cooking food.

7. Keep holiday plants away from pets

We remind you to keep festive holiday plants including poinsettias, mistletoe, and holly out of pets' reach. Ingesting any of these may cause a range of symptoms, while usually mild, ranging from stomach upset to low blood pressure.

8. Check your smoke detector battery

Smoke detectors should be tested regularly, and the batteries replaced at least once or twice a year. Mark your calendar to check your alarm during the holidays. A working smoke alarm cuts your risk of home fire death in half.

9. Celebrate safely, don't drink and drive

Every year, hundreds of people die in drunk driving accidents during the holiday season. If you plan to drink alcohol, make sure you have a designated driver to get you and your loved ones home safe and sound. Or consider using a rideshare app, like Uber or Lyft.

10. Choose a fire-resistant artificial tree and be sure to water a natural tree daily

On average, more than 200 house fires are caused by Christmas trees each year. To prevent this from happening to you, we remind you to exercise caution when placing, decorating, and maintaining either kind of tree. Position your tree at least three feet away from a heat source and remember to keep natural trees hydrated.

11. Maintain woodburning fireplaces and chimneys

Nothing is cozier than relaxing by the fire, but it's especially important to have heating equipment and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional. Also, keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from the fireplace, and maintain a three-foot "kid-free zone" around open fires and space heaters.

12. Travel safely and don't overshare on social media

Social media is a great way to share what you and your family are doing for the holidays. However, if you are leaving your home for an extended period, we remind you not to share your plans or pictures on social media until after you return. You could unintentionally invite thieves to break into your house while you're away.

The Safety Team at the City of Tulsa wishes you a safe and happy holiday season.