



Tis the Season to Be Merry and Stressed

The holidays are just around the corner. Holidays can be a joyful time with friends and family. For some people, holidays are the one time of year that family members gather together and catch up on what's happening in each other's life. Families follow important traditions, exchange gifts, enjoy great food, and fellowship. But holidays can also be stressful. Some people do not have families to spend time with during the holidays. Other people live on a fixed income. People may feel pressured

to spend a lot of money on gifts. Lack of money is one of the biggest causes of stress during the holiday season. There never seems to be enough time to get things done. All of these stressors can take a negative toll on everyone including individuals in recovery. If the holidays have been a stressful time in the past, here are some steps that can be planned in advance to help manage stress and enjoy the holidays.

- Set a budget and stick to it. It can be stressful after the holidays when bills arrive and you have overspent.
- Give something personal. You can show love and caring with gifts that have meaning.
- Develop a Wellness and Recovery Action Plan[®] (WRAP) for the holidays that includes a list of things you can do feel better and manage uncomfortable feelings, including stress.
- Set realistic expectations. Do not put pressure on yourself or family to have a perfect holiday.
- Avoid isolation - Attend a recovery meeting and visit a wellness and recovery center. Centers offer free activities, meals, and peer support. To locate a center near you click on this link:
<http://maryland.beaconhealthoptions.com/participants/files/Participant-Handbook.pdf>.
- Seek emotional support if needed. The Maryland Crisis Hotline 1-800-422-0009 is available 24 hours.
- Set boundaries. If you have a hard time being around relatives, limit the time you spend with them.
- Self-care – Set aside quiet time to relax. Get plenty of rest and try not to over eat.
- Give back. Helping others can be a rewarding experience.

While it is impossible to avoid all stress, taking these steps can help make the holidays more enjoyable.