Finding the Holiday Spirit: Self-Care

1. **Stay on schedule.** As much as you possibly can, try to stick with your normal routine during the holidays. Don’t stay too late at parties. Don’t pull an all-nighter wrapping presents. Disrupting your schedule and losing out on sleep can make your mood deteriorate.

2. **Exercise.** While you may not feel like you have the time to exercise during the holidays, the benefits are worth it. “We know that exercise has a pretty strong anti-anxiety, anti-depression effect,” says Duckworth. You can work physical activity into your errands. When you’re shopping, take a few extra laps around the mall. Walk your Christmas cards to the post office instead of driving.

3. **Eat sensibly.** When you’re facing a dozen holiday parties and family gatherings between now and New Year’s, it’s hard to stay committed to a sensible diet. But try. Eating healthy may keep you feeling better — physically and emotionally. On the other hand, don’t beat yourself up if you go overboard on the cookie platter in the break room. It’s not a big deal. Just get back on track the next day.

4. **Don’t rely on holiday spirits (or other substances.)** “The holidays are a time of heavy drinking,” says Duckworth. “It’s a common strategy for getting over anxiety about holiday parties or having the boss as your Secret Santa.” Remember that alcohol is itself a depressant and abusing it will leave you feeling worse. It also may not be safe for people taking antidepressant medication, says Pope.

5. **Try a sun lamp.** As the daylight grows shorter, lots of people find their mood gets gloomier. While some have diagnosed seasonal affective disorder (SAD), even people who don’t may still have a seasonal aspect to their depression. Talk to your doctor about trying a sun lamp.

6. **If you take medication, don’t miss doses.** In the hustle of the holidays, it’s easy to slack off and miss medication, says Pope. Don’t let that happen. Make sure that you’re up-to-date on your refills, too.

7. **If you see a therapist, have extra meetings.** To stay grounded, plan ahead and schedule some extra sessions during the holiday season. Or you could ask about the possibility of doing quick phone check-ins.

8. **Give yourself a break.** “The holidays can make some people dwell on their imperfections, their mistakes, the things they’re not proud of,” Duckworth tells WebMD. But try to cut yourself some slack.
“This is not an easy time of year for a lot of people,” Duckworth says. “Be gentle with yourself.” It is the season of kindness and forgiveness, after all. Save some of it for yourself.

Excerpts from WebMD

Leslie CS Easton, LCSW
Coordinator,
Mental Health Counseling Center A-221
Price Scholarship Counseling Program
San Diego City College
1313 Park Blvd
San Diego, CA 92101
ph: 619.388-3539
fax: 619.388-3823
http://www.sdcity.edu/CollegeServices/StudentSupportResources/MentalHealthCounseling.aspx

Please note the following privacy information: