The Holidays & Potential Risks

For people living with mental illness and their friends, relatives and colleagues, the holiday season can be a time of risk and overindulgence with significant consequences.

- 76.6 percent of people who have been diagnosed with anxiety or depression experience a return or exacerbation of their symptoms during the winter holiday (Canadian Mental Health Association)
- 19 percent of respondents felt less able to manage their mental health because of worries about paying off the cost of Christmas
- Overscheduling holiday parties and social events can overload and reduce coping capacity.
- Change in routine during the holidays can increase the likelihood individuals will miss taking their medication or take medication irregularly
- 39% of people admitted using credit cards to cover the cost of Christmas
- The lack of sunlight during the holiday season, among the shortest days of the year, can elevated depression and the Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)
- Overindulgence in food can make people tired and lethargic leading to increased feelings of being overwhelmed and regretful
- 5.3% of drivers involved in injury collisions and 22.5% of drivers involved in fatal collisions had consumed alcohol before the crash

The expectations of the holiday season can be at times, unrealistic. Be aware of the effects this may have on yourself and your loved ones. This is increasingly important for those dealing with mental illness, their friends and family.

Tips for staying mentally healthy over the holidays
- Set priorities: don’t be overwhelmed with activities
- Ask for help
- Beware of overindulgence: alcohol, spending, food, etc.
- Stay within a budget
- Include others
- Don’t forget your medications
- Don’t ignore warning signs: change in sleep, increased irritability, lack of personal time

If you or a family member is having difficulty coping during the holiday season, assistance is available, please contact the appropriate supports.

Contact Information:

Staff members & eligible dependents:
Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)
Phone: 780.428.7587

Human Resource Services
Phone: 780.492.2249

Students:
Human Resource Services
Phone: 780.492.5205

Counseling & Clinical Services
www.uwell.ualberta.ca

Postdoctoral Fellows:
Postdoctoral Fellows Assistance Program (PDAP)
Phone: 780.428.7587

Graduate Students
Graduate Student Assistance Program (GSAP)
Phone: 780.428.7587

Visit Faculty and Staff for information on mental health services.

Information on student mental health can be accessed at Current Students.