

Tips and Tools to Deal with Holiday Blues

The holiday season can be a great time to connect with family and friends, but it can also be a time of stress, anxiety, disappointment, and sadness. There are some strategies we can share with our students to help manage their feelings, expectations, and behaviors over the holidays. The tips and tools below are great to share during health-education classes, student assemblies, dorm meetings, or as part of individual meetings with counselors and Health and Wellness staff.

Tip	What to do	Tool
You can't control the actions or words of others, only how you respond to them.	Encourage students to take a step back and think before acting. If it's not going to be a positive outcome, rethink how to respond. Practice potential scenarios the student may face with family and friends, and healthy ways to respond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Education Curriculum – Emotional and Social Wellbeing, Module 5: Dealing with Conflict and Confrontation: https://supportservices.jobcorps.gov/health/Pages/HECurriculum.aspx
Get enough exercise and eat healthy foods.	Involve recreation and cafeteria staff in promoting healthy lifestyles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Healthy Eating and Active Lifestyles (HEALs) Web site: https://supportservices.jobcorps.gov/HEAL/Pages/default.aspx
Get enough sleep.	Discuss the positive emotional health benefits of getting enough sleep.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brochure: Sleep . . . Are you getting enough? https://supportservices.jobcorps.gov/health/Documents/sleep.pdf
Stay sober.	Maintaining sobriety can be very tough for some of our students over the holidays. Engage center's Trainee Employee Assistance Program (TEAP) Specialist to help students at risk develop a relapse prevention plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relapse Prevention 101 https://supportservices.jobcorps.gov/sites/Research/Pages/Results.aspx?k=relapse%20prevention
Reduce stress.	Teach students simple stress-reduction tools like how to remove themselves from a situation and breathe deeply. When things get too stressful, they can go for a walk, step outside, or even listen to music.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Breathing and meditation apps https://supportservices.jobcorps.gov/health/Pages/MentalHealth.aspx#mhapps ▪ Brochure: "Staying on Top of Stress" https://supportservices.jobcorps.gov/health/Documents/stress.pdf
Keep expectations low.	Remind our students that no family is perfect, no partner is perfect, and no holiday is perfect. Some things may not go as planned, and there may be bumps and mess-ups, but it won't be the end of the world.	N/A
Find enjoyment.	Encourage students to focus on the positive, and focus on gratitude. Talk with students about giving to others like volunteering at a shelter, or helping to feed the homeless.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health Education Curriculum—Emotional and Social Wellbeing, Module 1- Gratitude: https://supportservices.jobcorps.gov/health/Pages/HECurriculum.aspx
Ask for help.	Let students know it is OK to ask for help. If they find themselves sad and lonely and can't seem to shake the feelings, reach out to a friend or family member to share their feelings. If there is not a friend or family member, contact the center to speak with someone in Health and Wellness, a counselor, or trusted staff member.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800) 273-8255 ▪ Free National Suicide Prevention Lifeline wallet size cards http://store.samhsa.gov/product/National-Suicide-Prevention-Lifeline-Wallet-Card-Suicide-Prevention-Learn-the-Warning-Signs/SVP13-0126
Ensure students have additional resources.	Make information available for students to take home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brochure: "Ho Ho Uh Oh- How to Cope with the Holiday Blues" developed by Joe Grillo, PhD, CMHC https://supportservices.jobcorps.gov/health/Documents/holiday-blues.pdf