

City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program

Mental Health During the Holidays

The holiday season may bring along additional stress. Having more on your to-do list, increased social obligations, end of the year work deadlines, financial strain, the loss of a loved one and sunless winter days are just a few reasons why the holiday season may not feel so joyous.

According to the *American Psychological Association*, 38% of people surveyed said their stress level increased during the holidays. Individuals living with a mental health challenge may find the added stress overwhelming and experience worsening symptoms. The *National Alliance on Mental Illness* noted that 64% of individuals living with a mental illness felt their conditions worsened during the holidays.

Prevent = Predict, Prepare, Plan.

Preventing a mental health downward spiral during the holidays involves **predicting**, **preparing** and **planning**.

Be aware of (predict) possible triggers related to holiday situations. Next, ask yourself, what will help prevent the negative (prepare)? Lastly, lay out a specific plan that involves asking “*what if?*” questions for each likely trigger. For each question identify resources and actions that may help. Predicting and being prepared with a plan increases the odds of preventing an unwanted situation.

Grief and loss.

The holidays may not feel authentic when experiencing loss and grief. Predict when grief will be most difficult. Prepare to check-in with supportive people, a faith community, support group, friend or

therapist. Plan when and how to connect with others.

Overwhelmed by social obligations.

Predict the most important activities to participate in. Prepare saying “no” to invitations you don’t feel like attending. You may decide not to celebrate at all. Plan to spend time on activities that you actually feel like doing. For example, make a list of movies you’d like to stream/rent or a meal you’d enjoy making.

Feeling alone and isolated.

Predict times when feeling alone and isolated would be problematic to your mental health. Prepare to stay connected to others. This may include a plan to send out greeting cards, communicating by phone, text and/or social media. You may also plan to limit idle time by reading, meditating or listening to music.

Sunlight and Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

Predict if changes in daylight have the potential to impact your mood. Predict when limited sunlight may be most challenging (time of day/month). Prepare to get light in different ways. This may include a plan to work closer to a window or use your breaks to get some sun. You may consider brightening up your work/home areas with brighter lighting to improve your mood.

Preventing mental health symptoms during the holidays rests on thinking ahead and having a well thought out a plan to get through it. Anticipate that your plans may need to change here and there so be flexible and tweak your plan along with way.

Employee Assistance Program



City of Milwaukee EAP

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Driving Sober During the Holidays

The United States Department of Transportation reports that every day, about 28 people in the United States die in drunk-driving crashes, that's one person every 52 minutes. It is no surprise that drunk driving is most prevalent during the holidays. The sheer number of celebrations and individuals on the road make for a potentially deadly combination.

Driving while under the influence has a human cost, it also has financial consequences. According to Alcohol.org, one can expect a first-time DUI offense to cost anywhere between \$10,000 and \$25,000 or more when the tally is finally completed. Of course, these estimates do not include potential financial losses resulting from lost productivity or time away from work.

If you have a holiday gathering on your calendar, make smart choices and plan out how you're going to get home safely once the celebration ends. Today's smart phones make it easy to call a taxi, Lyft or Uber. Download and create a ride app account prior to going out to celebrate.

If you are the designated driver, make a commitment to 100% sobriety to keep you and your friends safe. Remind others of your need to stay sober when offered a drink or toast.

If you see an impaired driver on the road, contact local law enforcement immediately. If you have a friend who is about to drive impaired, take their keys and help make arrangements to get them home safely; it will be the greatest gift you ever give them.

EAP Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to assist employees who develop behavioral/emotional problems that may directly affect their work performance, and to provide Key Personnel with policy and procedural guidelines for the management of these problems.

City of Milwaukee Wellness Resources

- For information about current Wellness programs and services, visit: www.milwaukee.gov/WYCM
- The City's Workplace Clinic provides free, convenient, onsite and virtual health care services for employees and spouses regardless of enrollment in the City's health insurance and dependents (18 mos and older) on the City's health insurance. Call 414-777-3413 to schedule an in-person or virtual visit.
- The City of Milwaukee Employee Assistance Program web page houses topical information and resources on a wide range of work-life issues. Visit: <https://city.milwaukee.gov/DER/EAP>
- The City of Milwaukee offers a free Care.com membership through Care@Work to employees. A Care.com membership provides unlimited access to a platform employees can use to find and manage care for children, seniors, pets and their home. Visit www.milwaukee.gov/careatwork to learn more.

Winter Family Fun

Below are family friendly activities the whole family may enjoy.

- Visit the Mitchell Park Domes. www.mitchellparkdomes.com
- Ice skate in Red Arrow Park. Free skating, rentals available. 920 N. Water St., Milwaukee, (414) 289-8791. <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Parks/Explore>
- Visit the Milwaukee County Zoo or Museum for free. <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/News--Events/Milwaukee-County-Free-Days>
- Sledding in Whitnall Park. 400 foot sledding hill is free to the public and lit up at night. 5879 S. 92nd St., Franklin, WI.
- Take a walk at Lake Park. Check-out their activities calendar. <https://lakeparkfriends.org/visit/events/>
- Urban Ecology. Candle light walks, Winter's Eve Magic and snowshoeing. View their calendar of events. <https://urbanecologycenter.org/>
- Miller/Coors Holiday Lite Show. Nightly from 6 pm - 10 pm between December 1 through December 25. Please remain in your cars and park between the A-frame signs on either side of State Street. **Tune your radio station to 91.1 FM.**