

HEALTH HUB

December 2025



**The Holiday Blues:
Staying Well During a
Stressful Season**



“WHEN THE WORLD FEELS FESTIVE BUT YOU DON’T, YOU’RE NOT ALONE”

Feeling Cold? Find Warmth in Wellness

This time of year, for most of us, is filled with light, festivities, traditions, and warmth. Our Homes glow a little brighter, calendars fill with gatherings, and there’s an expectation that joy should come naturally. But beneath that festive surface, many people in our lives are navigating experiences that make the season feel heavier—grief that resurfaces, financial strain, family tension, exhaustion, or simply a sense of loneliness that stands out compared to all of the celebration around them. This is more common than we realize for those around us that are carrying quiet emotional burdens, and recognizing this helps us approach the season with more compassion, understanding, and care for both ourselves and others.

It also reminds us to take small steps for our well-being: taking mindful breaks, staying connected with trusted friends, moving our bodies, nourishing ourselves, and allowing ourselves to step back when it’s needed—so the season feels more intentional and less overwhelming.

In this month’s Health Hub, we’ll share ways to support those around you during the holiday season and throughout the chilly winter months. This time of year can feel cold and bleak, but finding different ways to care for your mental and physical well-being can make a real difference—for you and for anyone who may be struggling this season.



Written by: Codie Crosby, Health Educator

Codie blends her background as an Alaskan camp counselor and PE teacher to create personalized, engaging wellness plans. With years of experience working with youth (and their legendary stubbornness), she now brings that same playful, people-first approach to employee wellness—because deep down, we’re all kids at heart.



Understanding the “Holiday Blues”

Holiday Blues are feelings of sadness, stress, anxiety, or loneliness surrounding the holiday season. Even if these emotions and challenges are temporary, they still deserve recognition and compassion, as acknowledging them is an important step toward overcoming them.

Seasonal changes, like shorter daylight hours and colder weather, can also affect

mood, sometimes triggering symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)-a type of depression occurring most commonly in fall and winter. Understanding these challenges and taking proactive steps—like light therapy, maintaining routines, staying active, and seeking support—can help you and your loved ones navigate the season with greater resilience and well-being.



“From a public health standpoint, the holiday blues are not just an individual concern; they can affect entire communities. Mental health issues like depression and anxiety are public health challenges that impact productivity, relationships, and overall well-being. During the holiday season, healthcare systems may see a rise in cases related to stress, substance abuse, and other mental health conditions. Furthermore, the holiday blues can contribute to physical health problems. Stress, poor sleep, overeating, and lack of exercise during the holidays can worsen chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease. It’s important to recognize the interplay between mental and physical health, especially during a time of year when many people neglect self-care in favor of holiday demands.” (“The Holiday Blues: A Public Health Perspective”)

“The Holiday Blues: A Public Health Perspective.” Rocky Mountain Public Health Training Center, r4phtc.org/the-holiday-blues-a-public-health-perspective/.

Strategies for A Healthier Holiday Season

A survey* conducted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) found that 64 percent of individuals living with a mental illness reported that their conditions worsened around the holidays.

As the holiday season approaches, we've covered that it's natural to feel extra stress, and that this added pressure can sometimes make symptoms of mental health conditions, like depression and anxiety, or challenges with substance use feel more intense. The good news is that there are ways to care for yourself and manage these feelings. By using simple strategies to support your mental well-being, you can still find moments of joy, connection, and calm amid the season's demands.

Set Realistic Expectations

- Let go of perfection.
- Prioritize what is meaningful instead of doing everything.
- Be aware of your emotional limits and try to plan ahead for difficult moments.

Support your Physical Health

- Maintain regular movement—walks, stretching, or quick home workouts.
- Aim for balanced nutrition and avoid overindulgence that may worsen your mood.
- Prioritize consistent sleep and hydration; both of these strongly influence stress levels.

Stay Connected

- Reach out to friends, family, or community groups—even brief interactions can boost your mood.
- Be honest about your feelings; naming emotions reduces stress.
- Plan a few supportive check-ins with people you trust during the season.

Protect your Emotional Well-Being

- Practice mindfulness, gratitude, or deep breathing.
- Try a 5-minute guided meditation, write down three things you're grateful for, or use a simple breathing pattern like inhale 4, exhale 6.
- Spend time outdoors or increase light exposure.
- Take a short daytime walk or sit by a sunny window. If it's dark, use a light therapy lamp for 15–20 minutes in the morning.
- Build in downtime between events.
- Leave small breaks between gatherings to reset—take a short walk, read for 10 minutes, or simply rest before the next activity.

Engage in Meaningful Activities

- Volunteering, donating, or serving others can increase a sense of purpose and reduce loneliness.
- Create personal traditions that bring joy without pressure.

When to seek Additional Support

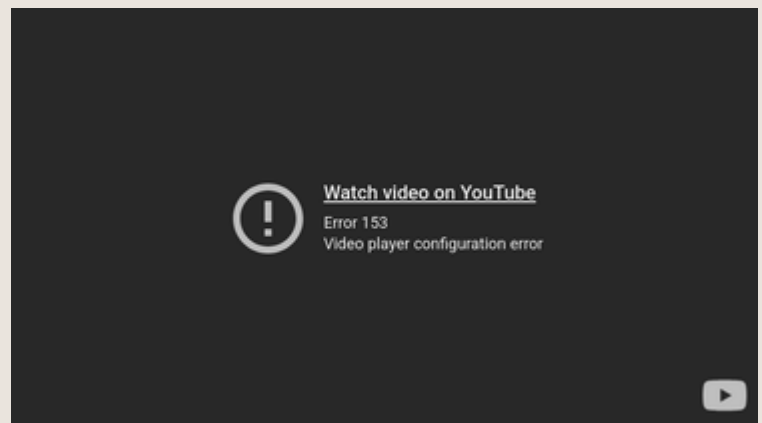
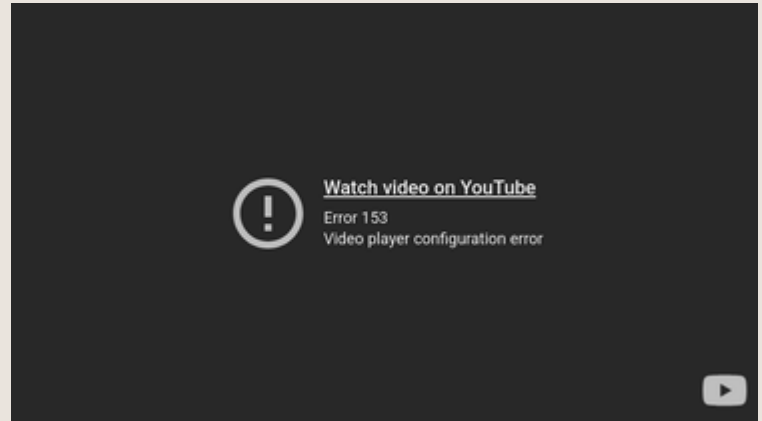
- Ongoing sadness lasting more than two weeks
- Major changes in sleep or appetite
- Withdrawing from daily activities
- Thoughts of self-harm

Reaching Out to Others

Here is your reminder to check on those around you and check in with yourself.

Reaching out to others can look like checking in on friends, family, or colleagues who may be struggling and helping them access the support they need. Programs like Utah's Live On campaign emphasize the power of community and mental health awareness, offering resources and encouraging open conversations about mental health and suicide.

By striving towards compassion, connection, and mindful support, you can care for yourself while also helping make the holidays brighter and safer for others. Recognizing that it's normal to feel a mix of emotions. Taking steps to offer or seek help —can make this season healthier, more fulfilling, and ultimately more meaningful for everyone.



Employee Wellness Resources

Want to learn more about this month's Health Hub topic? Find all of these workshops and more [here](#).

