

# Therapist offers advice on coping with stress, depression

December 22 2015, by Joyce Baptist

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Feeling overwhelmed or coping with symptoms of depression, anxiety or social phobia with the approach of the holidays?

Kansas State University's Joyce Baptist, associate professor and marriage and family therapist in the College of Human Ecology, offers the following tips on how to avoid holiday stress, especially if it jeopardizes your [mental health](#):

- Acknowledge your needs. The need to protect yourself, avoid re-traumatization or unnecessary stress is legitimate. Your feelings matter.
- Avoid triggers. Presence of a specific someone or alcohol beverages may be triggering. These are good reasons to skip those gatherings and instead volunteer at a holiday event in your community or for a good cause. These events should be uplifting and meaningful.
- Reach out. Discuss your decision to opt out of holiday gatherings with your closest loved ones. You don't owe an explanation to those who do not support or make you feel guilty for looking out for yourself.
- Quality time. Plan ahead to spend quality time with family members and friends who do matter. You will all benefit from more meaningful contact that can be difficult in large gatherings.
- Personal time. Take time to unwind and respect your need for space. Give yourself the gift of downtime.
- Seek professional help. If holiday stress exacerbates your mental

health, causing irritability, sleeplessness, severe depression or anxiety, seek help from a mental health professional. Talking to someone who is invested in your well-being can help relieve your [stress](#) and provide you with some strategies to manage your symptoms.

Baptist's research focuses on improving mental health, including depression. She is with the College of Human Ecology's School of Family Studies and Human Services.

Provided by Kansas State University

Citation: Therapist offers advice on coping with stress, depression (2015, December 22) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-12-therapist-advice-coping-stress-depression.html>

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