



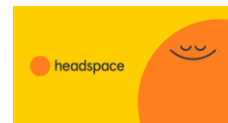
The holiday season soon will be here! Jam-packed social calendars, deadlines at work, perhaps the loss of a loved one, sunless winter days, sleepless nights, and family gatherings--the list goes on and on. It is important to remember that it is very common to feel added stress during the holidays. *What is also important is to keep the "me" in your merry.*

There are ways in which you can prepare yourself to alleviate some of the stress over the holidays and improve your mental health and thrive.

Practice Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness and meditation can be even more valuable mental wellness tools during the holiday season. Practicing mindfulness can be particularly helpful if you are traveling or dealing with a runaway social calendar this holiday season. Meditation is a great way to help you focus on what matters most this holiday season.

If you are new to mindfulness and meditation, there are many online resources and apps to help you. Here are a few to try!



Practice Gratitude



Whether the holidays bring you laughter and joy or feelings of loneliness and sadness, there are *always* things to be grateful for not only during the holiday season but each and every day.

Look out the window and take the time to appreciate the colours. Notice the wind in the trees. Indulge your sense of wonder in this world. There is strong evidence that documenting the things you are grateful for can lift your mood.

Practice Setting Realistic Goals and Expectations

Gift giving during the holiday season can leave you, and your bank account, feeling empty.

Set realistic expectations for gift giving. This will alleviate any pressure to spend more than you are comfortable with. You can make the holidays special without breaking the bank.

Remember it is truly the “thought that counts” and that the price of a gift is not what matters. Most people appreciate any gift that shows how much you care, including inexpensive homemade gifts.

One of the best ways to safeguard your mental health and well-being during the holidays is to establish clear boundaries with family and friends. Packed social calendars can be emotionally draining. Remember, it’s ok to politely decline an invitation to a last-minute party or to a gathering with family or friends; they will understand.



Practice Self-Care –Keeping the “Me” in Your Merry

While the holidays are an excellent time to look outward and appreciate the people in your life, don’t forget to appreciate yourself. Nothing is more important than scheduling time for yourself and for activities that recharge your mind and body. This may include reading a good book, working out, spending time in nature, listening to your favorite music, taking a break from social media, or light some candles and soak in a hot bath. It is essential to make your self-care practices a priority not only during the holiday season but all year round.



The holiday season is meant to be enjoyed; whatever that means to you! Most importantly, slow down, breathe, eat, sleep, laugh, and **BE** yourself.



Ask for Help

As simple as this sounds, it is often very difficult for many people to seek help, especially for our mental health. Humans are social creatures, and we benefit from living in social groups, supporting each other, and relying on one another’s strengths. Reaching out for help is a big step, and one that shows significant courage.

If you or someone you love needs help, ask for help. The Employee Family Assistance Program offered through Homewood Health, provides assistance to eligible UofR employees and their eligible dependents – 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year.

For more information about the EFAP Program and how to seek help, logon to UR Source [here](#).

Seasons Greetings



From your Health and Safety Team