

# Peninsula's Holiday Survival Guide 2018





# Happy Holidays!

**T**HE HOLIDAY SEASON IS a time for family, reflection and festivities. It can also be an emotional time as you cope with stress, sadness and fatigue. We at Peninsula, a division of Parkwest Medical Center, have created this handy guide to help you manage the hustle and bustle of the season.



With shopping, baking and social gatherings, you and your family members may experience stress and fatigue at an all-time high. With the right coping skills, you'll be able to enjoy the celebrations of this time of year. This year's handbook provides updated information in an easy-to-read format on the stressful topics you're most likely to encounter.

Included again in this year's handbook are tip sheets that provide quick access to helpful information. We encourage you to print these sheets to serve as reminders of specific steps to deal with stress. Also, we have included some brief self-tests here in the handbook.

We hope that the holidays allow you and your family to create memories that last for a lifetime. This year's guide can help you and your family do so while managing expectations realistically.

Take care of yourself and take the time to enjoy this season. We are here for you and your family.

Warm Regards,

Neil Heatherly  
*Chief administrative officer,  
Parkwest Medical Center*





# Table of Contents

**Have a Plan and Set Boundaries** .....1  
*Make a list, check it twice*

**In the Beginning** .....2  
*Put your lists to good use*

**Shop Smarter, Not Harder** \* .....3

**Holiday Travel** .....4  
*Decisions, decisions, decisions*

**Family and Holidays** .....6  
*Yours, mine and ours*

**Stay Connected with Your Children**  .....7

**Santa Claus** .....8  
*Fact or fiction?*

**Maintain, Don't Gain** .....9  
*Are holiday treats worth the weight?*

**Blue Christmas** .....10  
*Enjoying the holidays despite sadness, loss or grief*

**Getting through the Grief**  .....11


**Is it More than the Blues?**  .....12  
*When to seek professional help*

**Bah, Humbug!** .....13  
*Got anger?*

**Painful Secrets** .....15  
*Self-injury: knowing, understanding, planning*

**Joyful Recovery** .....17  
*An ongoing process, 24/7, 365 days a year*

**Support** .....18  
*When you need more than family and friends*

\*  While any page can be printed, topics with printer icons have special tip sheets to serve as easy reminders for dealing with specific holiday stressors.





# Have a Plan and Set Boundaries

## Make a List, Check it Twice

**S**TART THINKING ABOUT THE HOLIDAYS EARLY. Think about the current state of your life: your finances, your health, and any other obligations you must meet during the time between Thanksgiving and New Year's. These are non-negotiable.

Then sit down with a calendar and fill in all the dates you already know are booked. You'll be surprised how much it helps to actually see your commitments written out. Keep the calendar in a place the entire family can access, such as the refrigerator door.

### NOW YOU'RE READY TO DEVELOP A HOLIDAY PLAN:

**Be realistic.** Accept that your holidays will not resemble a Currier & Ives greeting card or a Norman Rockwell painting – and that's OK. Your holiday can be anything you want it to be, so give yourself permission to do what you want, not what you think is expected of you.

**Make a list – really.** Making lists can help you prioritize what needs to be done, what can wait and what can be skipped if need be. Do things ahead of time if you can, and don't sweat the small stuff. People eat grocery store cookies just as easily as homemade cookies.

**Make a budget and stick to it.** The only thing worse than Aunt Mabel's fruitcake is a pile of credit card bills when the holidays are over. Gifts don't need to be expensive, and going into unnecessary debt will be a burden in the new year.

**Delegate.** Surprise! You're only human and you shouldn't have to do everything yourself. Enlist the help of family and friends to do cooking, cleaning, decorating and even gift wrapping!

**Take care of YOU.** While preparing for the holidays, don't forget to care for yourself. Eat well, sleep plenty, exercise and take a little time for yourself each day. A hot bath, mug of cocoa or a good book can do wonders for your mental health.

**Learn to say NO.** Saying no isn't necessarily selfish. When you say no to a new commitment, you're honoring your existing obligations and ensuring that you'll be able to devote quality time to them.



## Can you pass the holiday stress test?

### Five Signs You May be Stressed:

- You're irritable.
- You're losing sleep.
- You're losing or gaining weight.
- You feel tense, with muscle aches or headaches.
- You feel overwhelmed.

Peninsula can help you manage your stress. For help, visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) or call (865) 970-9800.





# In the Beginning

## Put Your Lists to Good Use

**N**OW THAT YOU HAVE YOUR PLAN and know what you want to accomplish – and more importantly, what you can accomplish – it’s time to get started!

### DECK THE HALLS

**Holiday cards:** Enlist help from older children in addressing cards. Write one “here’s-what-our-family-has-been-doing” letter to include in the card. For more tech-savvy friends and family, consider sending an e-card. It’s free, saves time and is a way to go green this holiday season.

**Cleaning:** Clean only what is most necessary and save your deep-cleaning for after the holidays. With small children, make a game of tidying up and dusting. Put on some favorite music, and have them race to complete a room before the song is finished. Assign a family member to wipe down counter tops and sinks each day. It takes just a few seconds, but will save a lot of cleaning time in the long haul. If possible, you might want to consider having someone come in and clean for you before you put up the tree and decorations. Just watch the budget!

**Decorating:** Sometimes less is more. Inexpensive candles of the same color and varying sizes, along with ribbons and bows used throughout a room, can unify holiday decorations. Make it easier for next year when you take down your decorations this year. For example, put each string of lights in a plastic bag and label it by location such as “mantle.” Wrap each strand of lights neatly so you are not spending valuable time untangling them next year.

**Gift wrapping:** Get help with gift wrapping. So what if others don’t wrap exactly like you do? Use gift bags and boxes to save time, or have your children stamp colorful images on plain gift bags or brown craft paper. For gifts to children, consider using the Sunday funny papers.

### ENTERTAINING

**Don’t be pressured by the calendar:** Leave the tree up a little longer. Postpone a Christmas gathering until December 27 or 28, when guests are more relaxed and travel may be easier.

**Entertaining to go:** If you don’t feel like having people over, take the party out of the house. Organize a group to take a tour of the holiday lights in an auto caravan. Finish the evening with coffee and dessert at a casual restaurant.

**Group outings:** Gather your guests at the bowling alley, ice rink, theme park or indoor pool for out-of-the-ordinary entertainment. Order pizza or take advantage of the concession stand. Take photos, and send one to each guest as a post-party favor.

**In-home:** If you prefer in-home entertaining, co-op a progressive party with one or more of your friends. Each person invites an equal number of guests and shares all work and expense. Guests begin the evening with appetizers at one location, then head to another home for the main course, and to another for dessert.

**Food sanity:** It is perfectly all right to ask family and friends to bring a dish or two to any holiday gathering. It is also perfectly acceptable to take store-bought cookies, cakes, pies and other goodies to office or family parties. No one will think any less of you.

**Share the fun:** Make celebrations a team effort at work and a family activity at home. Children can do simple preparation tasks and help with clean-up as well. Play some holiday music and make it fun!

*Need additional help dealing with stress? Visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) or call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800.*

*Did you know that the “Twelve Days of Christmas” signify the traditional Christmas season beginning December 25 and ending on January 6 (Epiphany)? While Santa has a December 25 deadline, the rest of us can be more flexible.*



# Tip: Shop Smarter, Not Harder

***Make a Christmas shopping list.*** Write down everyone who will receive a gift from you this year, then list ideas for suitable presents and where you are going to buy them. Remember to include smaller gifts for people like teachers and babysitters. Keep a few generic gifts on hand, just in case someone unexpected stops by. Homemade candy, cakes and pies, as well as decorative candles, are inexpensive yet thoughtful gifts.

***Make a budget.*** Know how much you have to spend, and then spend only what is reasonable and affordable to you. Set a budget of \$10 for all of your smaller gifts. Budget \$25 maximum for friends or suggest going out for a nice meal as a group. Consider giving a family gift such as a board game or gift certificate to a restaurant. Stick to it.

***Shop early for Christmas presents.*** Don't wait for the eleventh hour. With all of the pre-Christmas sales, there's no reason not to dedicate some time and closet space for storing gifts. A bonus: you'll likely find your preferences such as color, sizes and styles in stock, which will prevent last-minute overcompensation. Just make sure to confirm the store's return/exchange policy, and always ask for a gift receipt.

***Spread Christmas shopping over weeks.*** Shopping early means gift buying can be done at a leisurely pace, allowing both your feet and bank account a chance to recover. Keep your list handy and keep an eye out for requested gifts while doing regular shopping.

***Shop smart.*** While family and friends are searching for a parking spot and fighting crowds at the mall, you can be at home shopping online while wearing your PJs and drinking coffee. Online shopping has its own advantages: free shipping promotions, no-hassle returns and often lower prices. Not sure of online shopping? Catalogs and shopping channels offer many of the same conveniences.

For more help with holiday stress, visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) or call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800.





# Holiday Travel

## Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

### AIR TRAVEL - FLEXIBILITY IS KEY

The Wednesday before Thanksgiving is the busiest travel day of the year. Traveling on Thanksgiving day is often more affordable and easier than any other day of Thanksgiving week. For the return home, Friday morning is a good choice; each successive day gets a little busier. Sunday is generally the most expensive return day, so be flexible if possible.

The same advice applies to Christmas and New Year's. For less stressful travel, fly on the holiday itself, and avoid Sunday evening at the end of the long weekend.

### SHOP AROUND & BOOK EARLY

Haven't booked your holiday travel yet? It's time to stop waiting and start booking! Fares are only rising as the holidays approach, so those who hold out in hopes of a late-breaking sale are likely to get left out in the cold or pay a steep price for procrastination. Book sooner rather than later, particularly if you require very specific travel dates or times. Use the internet to find discounted air and travel packages.

### DAY OF AIR TRAVEL TIPS

**Be early.** With increased airline security, give yourself and your family plenty of time to check in and board flights.

**Tag your bag.** Nothing is more stressful than arriving at your destination to find that your bags have been lost in the shuffle. Avoid this undue stress by marking your bag inside and out clearly to identify it. Pick a bright, unusual tag color. This will help your bag stand out from all the others at baggage claim.

**Don't wrap gifts you plan to carry on.** Security may need to unwrap the gift if surveillance equipment cannot see inside the package. Better yet, box and ship the wrapped gifts separately. The difference between paying a checked baggage fee and a shipping fee is often negligible.

### AUTO TRAVEL TIPS

**Stop frequently.** Allow your family the opportunity to get out of the car to stretch and exercise.

**Carry bottled water and nutritious snacks** in case you are stranded in traffic.



**Provide new activity books or other quiet toys** as surprises for your children on long car trips.

**Bring along a CD** or book on tape that the whole family can enjoy.

**Handheld video games** should be used with either the volume turned all the way down or with ear buds if possible. Use proper audio levels if using ear buds.

**Remember to pack device auto chargers if available.** There is nothing worse than a dead iPad or phone and a frustrated car rider.

### TRAVEL TIPS FOR KIDS

- Give older children their own map with the route marked, so they can understand where they are in relation to the trip as a whole.
- Place a physical barrier such as a suitcase or a bag between children to limit backseat skirmishes.
- Make time for children to amuse themselves and for family interaction such as singing songs or playing games.
- Give children a travel allowance to spend how they wish.
- For older children, invest in a backpack. Then allow them to choose and pack their own books and video games for the trip. Let your child know that you expect them to use ear plugs or turn the volume all the way down for portable music or video games.
- Make it clear that they are responsible for their bags.

For more help in dealing with holiday stress, visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) or call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800.





# Holiday Travel

## *Decisions, Decisions, Decisions*

### TRAVEL TIPS FOR PETS

Here are tips from the American Humane Society about taking your pet with you on your journey:

- Always make sure your pet is properly identified. Obtain identification with the address of your destination, as well.
- Whether going by plane, train or automobile, train your pet to travel in a carrier/kennel. This invaluable training will make the entire traveling experience less stressful to the animal, whether across the country or across town.
- Make sure your kennel is the proper size for your animal. It should be large enough for your pet to stand and turn around in comfortably. Kennels should be properly labeled with “This end up” and “Live animal” stickers if traveling by plane.
- If traveling by car, try to keep your pet on the same bathroom schedule as at home. Stop only when you would normally let your animal out.
- Never leave your pet unattended in your vehicle or in the airport.
- If traveling by plane, book direct non-stop flights if possible. Inform flight attendants that you have a pet in cargo if it is unable to be in the cabin with you.

- As a general rule, puppies and kittens, sick animals, animals in heat and frail or pregnant animals should not travel by air. Animals that are pug-nosed should not fly in the cargo area of a plane. If your animal is too large to fly in the cabin with you, a stay at the boarding kennel would be a safer choice.
- Bring copies of vaccination records with you, as you never know when you might need them. Pet health certificates are generally required if you fly with an animal on an airline.
- Plan well in advance. Some states have strict regulations for traveling with pets. Don't be caught at the last minute. Boarding kennels fill quickly during the high-travel holiday season, so it may be difficult to find a vacancy at the last minute.

*Peninsula can help with you deal with many types of stressors. For assistance, visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) or call (865) 970-9800.*







# Family and Holidays

## *Yours, Mine and Ours*

**F**OR BLENDED FAMILIES, the holidays can be a stressful and anxious time for parents and children alike. Feelings of jealousy or discomfort may intrude on hopes and expectations of family happiness. But with communication, understanding and creativity, blended families can overcome these stresses and enjoy the holidays.

### **HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO CONSIDER:**

***Be flexible.*** Don't insist on celebrating the holiday in a specific way or on a specific day. Compromise and flexibility are essential to a successful celebration. The best time to celebrate is whenever the family can be together.

***Encourage appropriate expressions of feelings.*** Listen patiently to one another without interrupting. Maintain open lines of communication so everyone can be heard. Pay special attention to children, who may feel their voices are getting lost in the holiday hubbub.

***Plan ahead.*** Discuss holiday plans well in advance to avoid problems or confusion. Encourage family members to share ideas and avoid unrealistic expectations. Try to keep each household's religious practices in mind, especially if they differ, so children can enjoy the best of both worlds.

***Once you have agreed to the plan for the season, follow it.*** That will help reduce the amount of tension between the former spouses and give the children a clear schedule to follow so they know what to expect.

***Avoid competition.*** Do not compete for time, attention or gifts from children or parents. Remember, the holidays are about spending quality time together, not who can take the children to the most new movies or buy the best presents. Minutes are far more valuable than dollars – use this opportunity to spend some quality time with your children. Gifts are fine, but try to ensure that they are comparable between households and are not used to try to buy the child's loyalty or affection.

The feeling of competition also needs to extend to the adults themselves. Stepparents should encourage the relationship between biological parents and children. Biological parents should likewise advocate a positive relationship between children and their stepparents.

***Don't over-commit.*** Enjoy as much family time as possible, but plan celebrations that are realistic. Focus on the quality of time spent together. Try to plan activities that are enjoyable for all family members.

***Begin your own traditions.*** Realize that your new stepfamily is different from your previous family. Try to establish traditions that capitalize on the uniqueness of your new family. Acknowledge the traditions you or your children may have experienced in years past, then move on to something that is meaningful for you today.

***Don't forget to laugh.*** Focus on enjoying yourself and don't be afraid to loosen up. Use humor to defuse stress.

***Be realistic.*** Despite good intentions, remember that the holidays do not always turn out as planned. Focus on making them a special time for you and your family, no matter the circumstances. Schedule some time alone for you and your spouse and remember to relax.

The holidays are a magical time for children and one of the best gifts adults can give them is to be civil with each other during this wonderful time of the year.

### **HOLIDAY SURVIVAL: KIDS AND THE GIFT OF TIME**

Holiday breaks are a great opportunity for parents to spend more quality time with their children. Used wisely, this gift of time can lead to lifelong benefits.

In 2016, 10.6 percent of youth ages 12-17 reported use of at least one illicit substance within the last 30 days according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. However, the majority of the youth surveyed (who did not report use of any substance) say that upsetting their parents or losing the respect of family and friends is one of the main reasons they don't drink alcohol or use other drugs.

Research also shows that children with unsupervised time are three times more likely to use marijuana or other drugs. Because school and holiday breaks are a time when more children go unsupervised, it's important to fill these breaks with as much quality time from you as possible.

Parents should talk to their teens, because the interaction builds open and trusting relationships. The more involved you are in your children's lives, the more valued they feel, and the more likely they will be to respond to you.

By spending valuable time with your children during the holidays, you will not only reconnect, but you will also make memories to be cherished in years to come.

*For help with family relationships, find resources at [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) or call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800.*



# Tip: Stay Connected With Your Children

**D**URING THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE of the season, we sometimes forget the joy of spending time and sharing and creating memories with our loved ones. Here are just a few suggestions to help you (re)connect with your children during the holidays:

**15 Minutes.** Spend the first 15 minutes after you or your child arrives home to find out what he or she did that day.

**Food.** Have a sit down meal (breakfast, lunch or dinner) at least four times a week – or as many times as possible.

**Make reservations.** Reserve part of your weekdays and weekends to spend some one-on-one time with each of your children. Older children have their own activities and social obligations, so planning ahead is recommended.

**Holiday classics.** While there may be better ways to spend time with your children than watching television, the holiday season is ripe with TV and movie classics and may offer a shared memory or experience that may help you reconnect with your child. You may also read a classic holiday novel or story, and play a favorite board game – a different one each night.

**Volunteer.** Volunteer to help your child with their holiday plans and activities such as parties and school plays. Even if you are just acting as a taxi driver, the few minutes you spend in the car alone with your child can be a golden opportunity to talk and connect.

**Do a holiday project together.** Make holiday cards to send to long-distance family and friends, or make some of the gifts you plan to give together. Homemade holiday cookies or ornaments are often good collaborative projects.

**Reminisce together.** Pull out photos of your past holidays and share memories sparked by the images. Home movies are a good way to teach your children about their relatives.

**Relive a childhood tradition.** With our busy lives and reliance on technology, it's easy to forget the traditions of our childhood and the happy memories that went with them. By reliving those traditions, you are connecting the past with the present and strengthening the bond with your child.

**Share the gift of giving.** Donate new toys to Toys for Tots, pick a child's name off of the Angel Trees found in many stores and churches or plan a holiday meal for a needy family.

For more family resources, visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org), or call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800.





# Santa Claus

## Fact or Fiction?

**N**EARLY EVERY PARENT STRUGGLES with what to tell children about Santa Claus.

There is no greater joy than seeing the happiness on your pre-schooler's face when he or she exclaims, "Santa came!" Conversely, there may be no greater pressure or guilt than having your 7- or 8-year-old look you in the eye and demand: "Tell me the truth: is Santa real?" School friends may claim Santa doesn't exist, or say Santa won't come if your child stops believing in him.

When that moment arrives – and it will – you might consider establishing the reality of the spirit of Santa Claus with some historic information: In around 300 A.D., Bishop Nicholas in Myra (modern-day Turkey) delivered food, clothing and money under the cloak of darkness so that his needy parishioners would not know the source of these unexpected gifts.

When the customs of Nicholas filtered into Germany, the old saint's name became Nicklaus, and the giving tradition was upheld. Saint Nicklaus was carried to Holland, and in Dutch, became Sinter Klaus. When the Hollanders settled in to New Amsterdam (modern-day New York City) in the 1600s, Santa Claus was born, and the charitable giving continued.

A picture of Santa Claus was provided by Dr. Clement Moore, a professor of Greek and Hebrew at General Theological Seminary in New York, when he penned a short, rhyming composition on Christmas Eve in 1822. The familiar poem starts, "Twas the night before Christmas."

### SO, IS SANTA REAL?

Here's a possible answer: "Santa is mystical, and that means being real, but in a way that you may not be able to see or touch. The real magic of Santa is good feelings that people have when they receive – or give – a surprise, a kindness or a gift. If you decide that Santa isn't just one person, and that he doesn't really fly a



sleigh all the way around the world in one night and deliver toys, that's OK. On Christmas morning, you'll always find something under the tree from someone who loves you very much."

### THE SANTA QUESTIONS

**The mall Santa.** "Is that man at the mall the real Santa?" Say no, he's just a helper dressed in a red suit.

**Reindeer.** Children may ask questions such as, "Do reindeer really fly?" Never lie. Admit you haven't seen a flying reindeer and to your knowledge they don't exist. If the child presses, remind them that it was part of Dr. Moore's poem.

**Santa didn't come.** Children may also ask harder questions, like, "Why do I always get so many toys, and Santa never comes to Molly's house?" That's a tough one. Only you will know if your child is mature enough to understand the spirit of Santa. And if he or she is, you might suggest how your child could be a secret Santa for a needy child.

**Santa and Jesus.** Some children may also be confused about Christmas being Jesus' birthday, but presents coming from Santa Claus. Explain in an age-appropriate way the difference between spiritual observances and cultural customs. For example, Thanksgiving was created to thank God for our country – that's the spiritual side. We also eat turkey with our families and watch football games – that's the cultural side. Tell them that it is fine to celebrate both spiritual and cultural traditions.

When it comes to parenting (or Santa Claus) issues, often there really are no correct answers. Operate from your heart and not your head.

For more assistance with family relationships, you can find resources at [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) or call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800.





# Maintain, Don't Gain

*Are holiday treats worth the weight?*

**O**NE OF THE BIGGEST challenges we have during the holidays is healthy eating. The average American gains one to two pounds every year from Halloween until New Years Day.

While this doesn't sound like much, the vast majority of people never lose this holiday weight. Therefore if you are the average American, ten years from now you will be 10-20 pounds heavier than you are today.

It's not just holiday meals that cause problems, but also holiday parties both at work and in homes and the treats and snacks many coworkers bring to the office. Even if you know that most of these treats are bad for your cholesterol, blood pressure and waistline, it's hard to turn them down.

## **IT'S ESSENTIAL TO HAVE A PLAN OF ACTION TO PREVENT HOLIDAY WEIGHT GAIN:**

**Share lighter fare.** Offer to bring a fruit or veggie tray with low fat dip to family gatherings.

**Don't go hungry.** If you are attending an open house during the afternoon hours, be sure you eat a healthy lunch before you go.

**Set limits.** Decide how much you will eat at a party before you leave home and stick to your decision.

For example, limit yourself to the amount of food you can fit on a small dessert plate. If you're tempted to go back for seconds, have a cup of coffee or hot tea instead.

### **Try healthier recipes.**

If you are hosting a holiday dinner or party, now is the time to try some new heart-healthy recipes. Many times you can modify your own traditional holiday recipes to make them healthier by making simple ingredient substitutions.

**Holiday snacking can wreak havoc on healthy eating. Instead of sweet treats or snacks with rich sauces, try some lighter fare:**

- Celery sticks with peanut butter and raisins
- A handful of dried cranberries and peanuts or almonds
- Fruit slices with caramel sauce or yogurt for dipping

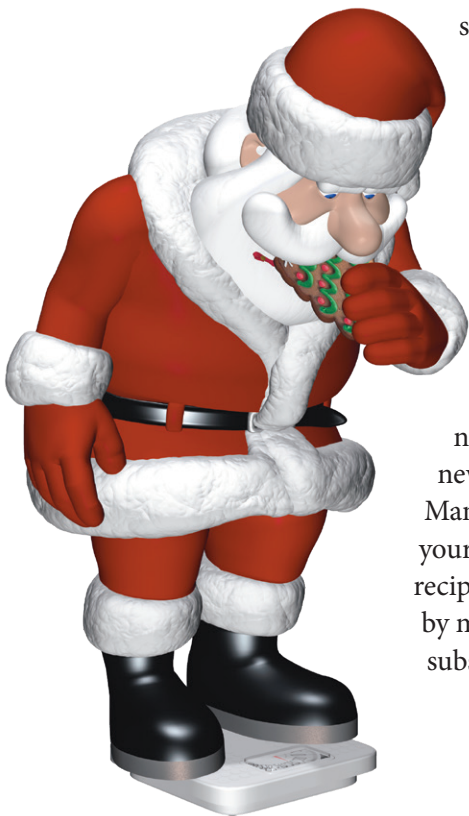
For a more substantial snack, try a high-fiber, high-protein option such as light tuna salad on whole-grain crackers.

**No food gifts, please.** It's perfectly acceptable to ask family and close friends not to give you food gifts at Christmas.

A wonderful gift for a health-conscious family member is a gift certificate for the Fort Sanders Health and Fitness Center's personal training program. This program is a great way to jump start your weight loss efforts. By working with a personal trainer, you'll have the tools to make the right diet and exercise decisions, and you will feel the difference a healthy and fit lifestyle can make for you. Consider giving the gift of good health to someone you love this year.

For more information on the personal training program please visit the website at [www.fshfc.com](http://www.fshfc.com) or call (865) 531-5083.

For additional information about healthy behaviors and lifestyles, visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) or call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800.



# Blue Christmas

*Enjoying the holidays despite sadness, loss or grief*



**J**UST BECAUSE WE EXPECT this time of year to be filled with an abundance of joy and good cheer, the season doesn't automatically bring us happy holidays – and it certainly doesn't banish reasons for feeling lonely or sad. In fact, it may increase your likeliness of feeling emotional and negative.

Death, divorce or other separation can cause a deep and acute sense of loss during the holidays. Relationships, finances and the physical exertion of the season can all play havoc with your life. Learn how to anticipate and circumvent the pitfalls of the holiday blues:

**Reach out.** Spend time with your significant other or a close friend who accepts you as you are. Look for opportunities to socialize and enjoy the company of others.

**Let the past stay in the past.** Don't let perceived past failures get you down. Leave the past where it is and, for that matter, don't worry about the future. Live in the present, especially if thoughts of the past or future cause you sadness, guilt or anxiety.

**Be who you are.** Sometimes when we are with family we tend to fall into preconceived roles. We may be the baby of the family or the fat girl. Keep a sense of who you really are. Don't be brought down by negative comments or the opinions of others, no matter how close they are to you.

**Take care of yourself.** Eat healthy, get plenty of rest, don't drink too much and don't overindulge on sweets and goodies.

**Lighten your heart.** A light holiday book, movie or live performance can lift your spirits and give you a break from your to-do list or other holiday stressors.

**Make time to experience the spirit of the season.** Religious services and rituals often bring a sense of peace and purpose to an otherwise frantic time of year.

**Help others.** Sometimes a good response to the blues is to move from self-focused to other-focused. Contribute to a meaningful charity or reach out to help others in a tangible way. Sometimes the gift of your time is as important – or more important – than a gift of money.



During winter months some individuals experience Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), brought on by decreased exposure to sunlight. Others experience holiday blues that last a few days. But sometimes our feelings go beyond the blues or SAD, and are serious signs of depression. If you or a loved one have holiday blues that seem to be lingering, watch for the following signs:

- Constant sadness or irritability
- Lethargy
- Loss of interest in pleasures once enjoyed
- Fatigue or lack of energy
- Feelings of guilt, hopelessness or worthlessness
- Changes in weight, appetite or sleeping habits
- Inability to concentrate or make decisions
- Thoughts of suicide or death

*If you are aware of any of the above signs or symptoms, seek professional help. A good first step: visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) for information or call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800.*



# Tip: Getting Through Grief

The loss of someone close to you – whether through death, divorce or other circumstances – can be especially difficult at the holidays. Here are some tips for those who are experiencing grief during the holiday season or who care about someone who is grieving.

## TO HELP YOURSELF:

**Take care of yourself:** Proper diet, exercise and sleep can go a long way toward helping you deal with stress and achieve a healthy balance in your life.

**Seek others dealing with similar experiences:** You may be able to help others with their problems and they with yours.

**Talk with family members:** Discuss holiday plans, feelings and expectations. Understand that the holidays will not be the same as before. This season might be a time to stop a tradition that makes you sad and replace it with a new one.

**Remember that others are hurting, too:** Whether the vacant chair at the dinner table is empty because of death or divorce, it is likely that others, especially children, are grieving just like you.

## TO HELP OTHERS:

**Keep in touch:** Realize that your grieving friend or family member is coping with an empty spot in his or her life. Phone calls, cards and letters or emails let the person know they are cared about.

**Reassure them:** Grieving people commonly feel guilty for not doing more. Remind them that they did what they could do at the time.

**Be understanding:** Grief may range from sadness to anger. Don't be offended if feelings are taken out on you. In time, the person will feel less devastated or angry.

**Offer help:** A grieving person can feel too overwhelmed to continue with routine chores, or he or she may need someone to take on the tasks that the loved one used to do. Don't wait to be asked – pitch in.

## TO HELP YOURSELF, DON'T:

**Act as if the person never existed.** Acknowledge the person by lighting a special candle, sharing a good memory or making a donation to their favorite charity.

**Try to shop your way into a merry mood.** Shopping may temporarily take your mind off your grief, but running up credit card debt can cause financial struggles and make you feel even more overwhelmed later.

**Act hurt as others wish you a “Happy Hanukkah” or “Merry Christmas.”** These greetings are just as natural for some to say as “Happy Birthday” or “Good Morning.” They don't mean to upset you.

**Feel ashamed:** Whatever you are feeling, it is right for you. Many people benefit from professional group or independent counseling on a temporary basis.

## TO HELP OTHERS, DON'T:

**Avoid the person:** Sometimes your presence is all that is needed. Don't get hung up on doing or saying the right thing.

**Offer irritating, cliché advice:** Do not say, “I know how you feel,” unless it is true. Also, do not say, “It was for the best.” Feelings of grief are acute, and saying these phrases does not help, even if you believe they are true. In cases of a lost child, do not say, “You can have another baby.” Each child is unique, and one cannot replace another.

**Pressure someone to stop grieving too soon:** Each person works through grief in his or her own way, on their own time scale – and that's OK. It is unproductive to tell someone it's time to get on with their life, or try to convince the person to let go of a loved one's remembrances if he or she is not ready.

To find out more about counseling services offered by Peninsula, call (865) 970-9800, or visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org).



# Tip: Is it More Than the Blues?

## *When to seek professional help*

If five or more of these symptoms persist for more than two weeks or interfere with work and family life, it may be time to seek help through a physician or mental health professional.

- *Feeling sad or empty*
- *A sense a loss of enjoyment or fun*
- *Inexplicable weight gain or loss*
- *Trouble sleeping or sleeping excessively*
- *Feeling restless or slowed down*
- *A lack of energy*
- *Feeling worthless or guilty*
- *Trouble concentrating*
- *Thinking a lot about death*

If you suspect that you or a loved one is suffering from clinical depression, call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800 or visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org).





# Bah, Humbug!

## Got anger?

**A**NGER IS A NATURAL and sometimes healthy emotion. Unfortunately, if anger is handled the wrong way, it can damage relationships and affect professional and social growth. Learning where your anger comes from and how to deal with it can help lead to a happier, more productive life.

**Understand your anger's origins.** Some people are born with a tendency to be irritable or easily angered. If you have a history of dysfunction or chaos in your family, you are more likely to have anger problems. Society can also be an influence. Anger is often thought of as a negative emotion, so people are not always taught to deal with it effectively.

**Recognize how you display your anger.** Perhaps you isolate yourself or become physically ill. Maybe you have a low tolerance for frustration and can't let things go. Or you may find yourself acting in ways that seem out of control, and your reactions scare those around you.

- Determine what triggers your anger.
- Put yourself in the other person's place. Try to see his or her point of view. If you don't understand it, ask questions until you do.
- Recognize the humor in a situation. Make sure the laugh is on you, not the other person.
- Learn to express displeasure in constructive ways. Instead of saying, "You blew it!" try asking, "How can we fix this?"
- Practice relaxation techniques.
- Walk away. Come back to the situation later, after you've had a chance to cool off.

**Create an action plan.** Here are some tips to help you handle anger more constructively:

- Relax. Breathe deeply, repeat calming words or visualize a relaxing place.
- Use logic. Remember that getting angry is not going to fix things and that much of the stress that you are facing is a part of daily life.
- Cool down. Before dealing with the person who is making you angry, release energy by taking some time by yourself. Try going for a walk.
- Communicate. When having a conflict with another person, listen carefully to the meaning behind what the person is trying to say instead of immediately reacting.

- Be aware. Learn to recognize your triggers. Mentally prepare yourself for a situation that tends to make you angry or try to avoid the situation altogether.

If your anger is severely out of control or has a large impact on everyday life, you may need professional help. Talk with your doctor if you are concerned.



## WOMEN AND ANGER

Anger is an emotion that says something is wrong. It can be expressed to tell others about your personal limits, values, rules and boundaries. Learning how to express anger assertively and constructively can improve your personal interaction and your health.

Being angry and expressing it is normal and healthy. However, most women are taught that such expression is unacceptable at an early age. Many women aren't in touch with their anger, or they don't know how to express it.

## INDIRECT ANGER

Because of their socialization, many women express anger indirectly by sulking, being sarcastic, taking revenge or being hostile. The following habits or tendencies also can indicate hidden anger: excessive irritability over little things, chronically stiff or sore neck or shoulder muscles, being overpolite, anxiety attacks, heart palpitations, panic attacks or compulsive overeating, overworking or overexercising.

Women who become conscious of their anger,







# Bah, Humbug!

## *Got anger?*

however, can learn how to express it in constructive ways.

Some women express their anger too aggressively, venting their rage, attacking or blaming another person.

### **FIRST STEPS**

The process of learning to positively express anger can be divided into three parts:

**Recognizing your feelings.** Almost all emotions are connected to some sort of physical reaction. Being aware of your physical reaction when you're angry can help you identify this emotion when you feel it.

**Owning your feelings.** The anger is yours. Another person may have said something or done something that punched your anger button, but the anger is yours and so are the feelings it triggers.

### ***Responding to your feelings in a better way:***

Learning and practicing constructive problem-solving can help you express and manage your anger.

The following strategies will help you approach problems in a controlled, effective manner:

- Make sure you're in a calm state of mind before confronting someone.
- Don't bring up a long list of complaints from the past. Instead, tackle one issue at a time.
- When bringing up or discussing a problem, always focus on the other person's behavior (what he or she is doing or not doing) rather than his or her personality. For example, say, "I would like you to become better at being on time," rather than "You're such an unreliable jerk."
- Be aware of your body language. Maintain eye contact and keep a relaxed and open body posture when talking.
- Speak in a normal tone and at a normal pace. Don't shout, yell or talk too fast or too long.

- If the other person disagrees with you, listen to his or her point of view, then restate what was said.
- Be willing to negotiate a solution. Avoid getting into an "I'm right, you're wrong" battle.
- Be patient with yourself and others.

*For help with dealing with anger or other emotional stress, call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800.*





# Painful Secrets

## *Self-injury: knowing, understanding, planning*

**T**HE TEEN YEARS CAN be the most complicated phase of life. Challenges include school work, changes in relationships and physical changes. For some teens and adults, self-injury becomes an unhealthy coping mechanism for stress and anxiety. If the holidays are more “bah, humbug” than “ho ho ho,” it’s important for someone who self-injures and their caregivers to be aware of personal stressors and develop a plan for dealing with them in a healthy way.

### WHAT IS SELF-INJURY?

When you hurt your body on purpose it is called self-injury. Other names for self-injury are cutting, self-harm or self-mutilation. Some people hurt themselves by cutting, scratching, picking or burning their bodies or embedding foreign objects into their skin.

How do you know if you self-injure? It may seem an odd question to some, but a few people aren’t sure if what they do is truly considered self-injury. Answer these questions:

1. Do you deliberately cause physical harm to yourself to the extent of causing tissue damage, including breaking the skin, bruising or leaving marks that last for more than an hour?
2. Do you cause this harm to yourself as a way of dealing with unpleasant or overwhelming emotions, thoughts or situations?
3. If your self-harm is not compulsive, do you often think about self injury even when you’re relatively calm and not doing it at the moment?

People who self-injure might not feel pain and can do more damage than they mean to. They sometimes hurt themselves repeatedly and often have scars. People who cut themselves often wear long sleeves, even in warm weather.

### WHY DO PEOPLE SELF-INJURE?

People who injure themselves are experiencing overwhelming feelings like extreme anxiety or tension. In the moment, self-injury may seem to provide a feeling of escape or relief. Some people also experience depersonalization, which is when a person doesn’t feel real or feels as if he is outside the body watching himself. People who feel this way might cut or harm

to help them feel real again. Others cut or injure themselves as a way of self-punishment. Many people who self-injure have a history of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, and have a sense of shame about themselves.

Most people who self-injure haven’t learned healthier ways to cope with negative feelings. Although you might feel stuck in a pattern of injuring yourself, there is a way out.

### HOW DO I STOP HURTING MYSELF IN THE MOMENT?

It’s important to find ways to soothe or focus yourself when you feel like self-injuring. Make a list of non-harmful things that help you feel relaxed and real, like playing a sport, meditating, drawing or playing an instrument. Keep this list where you can see it so when you feel like hurting yourself you will have other options and you can choose to do something else.

#### *Alternate ways to use nervous energy:*

- Go for a long walk
- Dance to loud music
- Shoot hoops or kick a soccer ball
- Go jogging
- Clean your room

#### *To relax and de-stress:*

- Take a bath or hot shower
- Listen to music
- Write in a journal
- Talk to a friend
- Read a good book
- Meditate





# Painful Secrets

## *Self-injury: knowing, understanding, planning*

Many people find that keeping busy and spending time with good friends and family helps the most.

### **HOW CAN I RECOVER FROM SELF-INJURY?**

Self-injury is a symptom of deeper emotional pain. Getting counseling or psychotherapy can help you better understand your feelings and your life situation. A counselor or therapist can help you figure out why you hurt yourself, what situations put you at risk and what steps you can take to learn healthier ways to deal with intense emotions. If you are also dealing with depression, anxiety or other mental health issues, a therapist can address those, too. Sometimes a healthcare provider may recommend medication as part of your overall plan for recovering from self-injury.

Making the decision to stop self-injuring is a big first step. Learning healthier ways to handle intense feelings will take time. The key to recovering is to get support from people who care about you, and treatment from an experienced therapist or counselor. You deserve this change, so keep working on it. You are not alone in your recovery.

*For more information and help, call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800 or visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org).*



### **Is self-injury the same as being suicidal?**

No, but sometimes injuries can be severe enough to cause death, and sometimes people who self-injure may become suicidal.

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal you should get professional help immediately. Tell someone you trust or someone who can help right away. If you cannot find someone to help you or do not know what to do, call 911 or go to the closest hospital emergency room.

*Special note: if you have a cut that is infected or that won't stop bleeding, seek first aid right away.*

Trained professionals are available 24/7 by calling the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800)-273-8255. Tennessee Residents also have access to the 24/7 Crisis Text Line, and can access it by texting "TN" to 741-741.





# Joyful Recovery

*An ongoing process, 24/7, 365 days a year*

**T**HROUGHOUT HIS TEENS AND EARLY 20s Ryan used alcohol and prescription drugs to deal with the stresses of everyday life.

After hospitalizing a relative and a stint in jail, he got clean and sober.

Nine years later, Ryan is committed to his sobriety and has learned to deal with stress in a healthy way. He admits that the holidays are hard for him, but not just because of the parties and festivities. Ryan is an only child of parents who divorced just a few years ago.

Ryan points out that whether you are newly sober or have 10, 20 or 30 years of sobriety, addiction is a disease fought on a daily basis. He believes in having a plan when attending parties, festivities or gatherings where temptations and stress can act as triggers.

Peninsula experts agree and offer these tips for resisting certain things during social or family events:

**Parties.** Do not attend parties or other situations where you know illegal substances will be present. This is a major step in making good decisions that lead to lifelong recovery.

**Beverages.** If you are unsure whether non-alcoholic beverages will be served, bring your own. Once the beverage is in your glass, chances are others will not know that you have only soda.

**Location.** Choose an area of the room away from the bar to hang out. This may feel odd to those who are new to sobriety, but the payoff is worth it.

**Stay busy.** Dance, eat, talk to other guests or offer to help the host.

**Be prepared.** Go to parties prepared to outsmart your disease. When someone says, “Would you like a drink?” you do not owe explanations. Either reply “No, thank you,” or “Yes, a sparkling water with lemon would hit the spot right now.”

**Leave early.** If you feel that you will not be able to resist the temptation to drink, leave. Call someone who supports you and helps keep you sober one day at a time. Have your sponsor, clergyman, counselor or best friend’s number on speed dial.

If you need help with alcohol or other addiction problems, Peninsula Lighthouse offers confidential counseling services that will help you get back in control while you continue your daily routine of work and family responsibilities.

Experts know that not all people with a drinking problem are able to take that first step toward recovery themselves. That’s why the intervention of friends and family members is so important. Get involved if you know someone who may need help. Visit [www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) or call Peninsula at (865) 970-9800 for help with recovery, or information about how you can assist a loved one.





# Support

*When you need more than family and friends*

**T**HE ADDED STRESS OF the holidays can be daunting, especially for those who already are dealing with their own or another person's depression, anxiety, chemical dependency, other medical conditions or loss of a loved one. That's why a strong support system can be an important resource for recovery and empowerment.

While friends and family can provide strength and support for many people, it may be helpful to turn to others outside your immediate circle. Support groups bring together people with similar problems to share emotional problems and provide moral support.

Peninsula Lighthouse offers outpatient groups for people who have psychological, behavioral and/or alcohol and drug problems, and those with loved ones who have addiction or psychological problems.



**All support groups meet at the Peninsula Lighthouse campus at 1451 Dowell Springs Blvd. in West Knoxville. Call (865) 970-9800 for directions.**

## *Peninsula Lighthouse Outpatient Groups* *Insurance required for active patients*

**Diagnostic Issues Group:** Group discussion focusing on problem solving and developing supportive relationships.

**Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Training Group:** Skills training to combat negative thinking – typically 6 months duration.

**Circle of Friends:** For special needs adults (psychotic disorders interfering with ability to function in typical group setting, mild spectrum autism, & developmental disabilities.)

**Women's Only Group:** Any female with diagnostic issues can attend and all insurances accepted.

**Enhancing Recovery Wisdom Group:** Group discussion focusing on problem solving in enduring recovery.

**Bridges Group:** Group discussion focusing on problem solving in early recovery.

**Weekly Teen Group (Ages 12-17):** Skills for managing frustration, setting and holding limits, building healthy relationships.

**Seeking Safety:** Present-focused, coping skills model for clients with a history of trauma and/or substance abuse. This group does not focus on discussing details of the experience of trauma; rather the focus is on building the skills to effectively cope with the experience of trauma.

**Solution-Focused/CBT Group:** Group discussion and skill building using cognitive behavioral techniques to improve reducing symptoms of mental illness.

## *Free Support Groups Open to the Public*

**ComPass Group (Communicating the Pain as Suicide Survivors):** Navigating the Ocean of Grief after the Suicide Death of a Loved One

**Families Anonymous:** A support group for family members seeking ways of dealing with the problem of substance abuse and addiction in their children or family members. Members include parents, grandparents, siblings, spouses, significant others, other family members and friends of those with a current, suspected or former drug problem.

**Call (865) 970-9800 or visit [peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://peninsulabehavioralhealth.org) for more details.**





A Division of Parkwest Medical Center

**Covenant**  
HEALTH

**(865) 970-9800**

**[www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org](http://www.peninsulabehavioralhealth.org)**

