

How to Thrive This Holiday Season

Welcome to how to thrive this holiday season. I will be one of your moderators today. Along with my colleague. I'm excited to introduce our guest speaker. Molly is a licensed professional counselor and care manager. She is worked with individuals and couples in inpatient and private practice settings. She is training and setting an experience and has worked with clients regarding anxiety, depression, trauma, and self-injurious behavior. She has a specialty focus on working with gender diverse clients and supporting individuals identify as LGBTQ I A+. >> Thank you. Thank you everyone for being here enter time. I am excited to talk today on a very timely topic. I would like to thank everyone who participated in the opening poll and we will be doing several of those throughout today's presentation. Since the phone lines are muted, the poles are a great way to give input which I greatly appreciate. Looks like from your responses, I can see the holidays really elicit a wide range of emotions. On the one hand, there are feelings of fun, joy, excitement, happiness. On the other it looks like lots are experiencing sadness, grief, worry, anxiety and stress. Even chaos in dealing with hustle and bustle. What is behind those emotions? Before we review our learning objectives, let's take a look at the next poll question to better understand where those emotions come from. Right now, Melanie will introduce another poll question to think about and get information.

Have this pulled up now. What are some difficulties you have encountered from your most recent holiday experiences? Or worry about experiencing with upcoming celebrations? We have lots of responses coming in. Things like coparenting after divorce, family conflict. I see quite a few COVID-19 concerns. Travel, combining family. We have some finances, setting boundaries, drinking, people are bringing up politics in dealing with other people, maybe family members talking about politics.

Many talking about not being able to see family members or setting boundaries.

Lots of people responding.

Thank you everyone. As Melanie said, lots of people responding. There are some very clear challenges that many of us face. As mentioned, some of those common themes seem to be family, navigating issues of blended families, coparenting, traveling, politics, dealing with a pandemic and COVID-19. Lots of things we face this year that are new. How do we survive it? Or better yet, how do we thrive? What have a positive and joyful experience. It's our intent going in but somewhere along the line, get off track. Before we know we feel stress, worry, the idea of having that joyful relaxing time that maybe we had wanted with loved ones. Sometimes is the furthest from our mind. Let's take a look at our objectives. Our objectives to identify common reasons the holidays are more stressful than others, with this we will try to increase our awareness of your unique challenges and the points of stress during the holiday season. That are unique to the season and this year. We will have expert coping skills and boundary setting so we will begin thinking about what you can do to prevent these issues and

set specific goals towards change so you can have the kind of holiday experience you would like to have.

Been sharing additional resources. Would like to leave you with resources to get more ideas and help in specific areas. As part of that, we'll talk about the benefits of your employee assistance program and all of the resources and help available.

This is were 2020, Hanukkah begins the evening of Thursday, December 10 and ends an evening of Friday, December 18. Kwanzaa begins Saturday, December 26 and ends Friday, January 1. Christmas is December 25. New Yorkers New Year's Eve is December 31. Before we go delving into the slide, I would like to understand more about your upcoming celebrations and your commemorations. This could be holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, anything important to you in this time. Melanie will introduce another poll question for you to think about.

If you can share with us, what are you celebrating? It can be anything. Any of these celebrations were we get together, anniversaries, birthday, holidays, whatever it may be in it looks like there's lots of celebrations. Some slowing bought their first house. Birthday, wedding anniversary, Thanksgiving and Christmas. We have some new babies. Halloween. Halloween has become a major holiday in my neighborhood. People decorate and is a big celebration. We have some celebrations of life. Granddaughter's birthday. Fall in general. Vacation. That's a reason to celebrate these days, for sure. It looks like a lot of the same. Many birth days, anniversaries, family gathering. And traditional holidays. Thank you so much for answering. >> Lots of things people are celebrating, commemorating from a broad range of experiences. Lots of things on people's mind. This holiday season will be different from all others. We can look at some of the most common threads or challenges to have that enjoyable celebration. Some of which we already talked about. We will talk about those more in detail. Let's go ahead here. >> Sometimes people can experience sadness and depression during the holidays for a number of reasons. One is a clinical condition called seasonal affective disorder you will experience a mood change during the winter months, what is less natural sunlight. People can also experience the triggering of grief reactions. Of loved ones who have passed on and it can be very debilitating as memories of the loved one surface and reality sets in of the holiday without them. Finally, increased stressors that accompany the holidays can trigger feelings of sadness and depression. Now that you know about your triggers, let's discuss practical strategies for you to encourage a coworker or loved one to try. Before we do that, if we can back up for a moment, I think we have another poll question to think about that Melanie will introduce. >> I will pull that over here. What are some of the reasons people experience sadness over the holidays? Maybe some of the reasons you feel sad. About the upcoming holidays. >> We have people with lots of different answers. Some are saying just a change in the weather. Lots of loved ones, being alone. Lots of people talking about loneliness or missing someone has already passed. Passive-aggressive family members, dealing with relationships. I see lots of people who aren't here anymore, missing those people. Just the weather and changes of season, seasonal affective issues. Finances. And social pressures. Thank you everyone for filling that out.

We can see there are a lot of reasons and sources why people may have some sadness and dealings of depression and anxiety over the holiday season. Some of you have recorded in the polls, loneliness, missing other family members, even just the change in the weather as mentioned. Now that we know a little bit about those triggers, let's talk about strategies for you again to try to encourage you or coworker to try to alleviate some triggers or symptoms. We can't always take the sadness away. There are very practical things we can do to try and lessen the pain and prevent the worsening of the symptoms. And so we can talk about now.

>> One thing we can do would be to knowledge accept your feelings. Is someone close to you has passed on, realizing its normal to feel sadness and grief. It's okay to take time to cry and express your feelings. Cannot force us all to be happy just because it's the holiday season. Really understanding and acknowledging those emotions you feel. Getting realistic and setting limits. The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. This year will be different. With changes in family and circumstances come to natural make adjustments in the holiday tradition. Taking of rake from some, maybe adding to others, adjusting to others. That may be necessary period don't be afraid to say no or set limits on commitment you make. Tell yourself it's okay even when others don't understand or agree with your choice. >> What's most important is making decisions that are best for you now. Celebrate with your loved one. Grading a new tradition that celebrates and memorializes your loved one or coworker maybe who has passed on to some examples may include creating a memory jar, burning a memory candle, sharing stories or photographs. Acts like these can be very comforting to those struggling to make it through the celebration. They can also serve as a bridge for others were unsure of what to say, what not to say, during this holiday season.

Taking a timeout. Just for 15 minutes alone, free of distractions. Find something that reduces your stress, taking a walk , reading a book, listening to music, whatever works for you. Simply taking that timeout for yourself can go a long way in preventing additional stress and give you the resources to successfully navigate world. That stress that can come with the holiday season. >> Practice self compassion. Practicing self compassion could help increase resilience and reduce those feelings of stress. Leading researcher advocates using guided meditations and self compassion exercises to develop a practice of caring for yourself which is so important. Keeping a self compassion journal, treating yourself as a treasured and trusted friend or honored guest and taking self compassion breaks are always taking care of yourself. It's important to stay active and keep a schedule. It's a great way to release hormones called endorphins. Keeping that brief schedule, keeping that active walking and activities are very important especially during this season. Reaching out and seeking help. Reaching out and connecting with friends, coworkers, family, religious organizations and you may also find it help all to talk to your doctor or mental health professional and contact your EAP is a great place to start. Another key threat is family travel. Take a look at that. Specifically with small children, that can be very challenging. If you had the pleasure of this experience, you know we're talking about. I believe now Melanie will introduce another poll.

Yes. I want to have people raise their hand this time. If you will be traveling with children this holiday season, can you raise your hand? The raised hand icon is towards the upper left-hand

corner of your screen. I will let you know we have. If you're going to travel with children, raise your hand. Is towards the upper right or left hand corner of your screen. It looks like about half of the people here are raising their hand.

Thank you everybody. About half the people will be traveling. Let's talk about tips and tricks to make that a good experience for everybody. Starting with adjusting your attitude. Your approach and attitude will be crucial for the travel experience. Expect the unexpected including delays, cancellations, etc. Even planning for that and building that in may be held. Consider setting up in advance as a family adventure with unknown twists and turns. Even connected to an adventurous character, your child might relate to if they like finding Nemo or lightning McQueen car so making it personal so they are very engaged and maybe even it will help them be more flexible put it into context for them. Later when things don't go as planned, you can constructively focus your child with storytelling such as lightning didn't expect end up in radiator Springs or remember how Nemo ended up on all those adventures, they didn't expect those things happen but they had a lot of fun and they made new friends. Helping rephrase that for your child and getting back on track with that positive expense. Your stress is decreasing with their new change. This also be an important time to take care of yourself. Consider practicing taking care of the caregiver exercise when you need to recharge, taking a few moments offer yourself to recharge and put back in that good energy for yourself.

Have realistic expectations of timing and scheduling. Trying to plan travel to coincide with schedules depending on what works best for your family. This can be challenging. It's useful to think ahead of time and try your best to schedule those according to everybody. Naps and sleep schedule, if you are flying, Chaya nonstop flight for early or late flights when you can. If you drive, be realistic on the number of hours your kids can tolerate at once. Allow for longer rest area stop so they can run and play to release energy. You can even bring games along the way, books, activity, if you're staying at a hotel, try to book one with an indoor pool so you can tire them out before bed with some swim time while you relax after your long day of travel.

Packing and essentials back. Whether you fly or drive, you will need an easily accessible bag, traveling for the first time with the child could also be a time you learn of their car or airsickness. You want to be prepared with plenty of wet wipes and Telstra cleanups and extra changes of clothes for you and your child. Try to include Ziploc bags to steal the mess away which can be very helpful. Have plenty of diapers, formula, extra bottles and baby food, all your typical supplies. Bring a small first-aid kit and over-the-counter medicine such as Tylenol or ibuprofen. Although those items are usually readily able to be purchased, it's not always realistic or timely to go shopping. Also for kids, select items to entertain themselves on the trip. You could borrow or download a novel or new games, books, movies, consider giving technology limits or a literal holiday as a handheld device loaded with age-appropriate apps and games. That's the most compact toybox.

Remember to include plenty of car, electronic, external charges and headphones with earbuds.

You may need to check in advance to see what fits or what your child would tolerate because each is very different. In toddlers, some small stickers and toys as well as novel snacks can be sources of entertainment. Rewarding positive behavior. Consider transporting any home token or reward program you are already doing. Otherwise, a couple of ideas to consider could be wrapping smaller inexpensive presents in giving rewards for good behavior along the way. Preferably they could be additional items for sustaining attention such as small books, stickers, baseball cards, travel games money reward systems may not work for very young children that you could have dollar bills, pens and give a dollar for each time the child is good with the positive behavior. Discussing those behavior expectations in advance can be very helpful. Everyone knows what's expected and everyone can agree and be on board with this.

These are just some ideas that you will need to decide what works best for you and your family.

The most important pieces are preplanning, setting realistic expectations with yourself and others and adjusting your approach and being flexible. For more ideas about positive parenting and traveling with your children, dealing with temper tantrums and managing difficult behavior, I recommend the 1-2-3 Magic approach. It's a great resource and he talked specifically about traveling with children and how to make that more manageable and enjoyable.

Let's talk about budgeting during the holiday season. Believe now is the time we Melanie will introduce another poll question.

Let me pull that over here. Those of you who plan to give holiday gifts, which best describes your budget last year? You just click the radio button in front of your response which will broadcast your answer and the responses are, I didn't have a budget, I stuck to my budgets or I went over my budget a bit more I blew mild budget which one fit for you. In a moment we will let you know where we are with that. >> Molly, it looks like right around 65-66% of people say they went over there budget a bit. I'm sorry, 36%. Then we have 29% that I stuck to my budget and 28% said they did have a budget. Most who went over a bit's and right in half of those who didn't have a budget or they start to it. >> Thank you. This looks like finances and budgeting, we can talk again about tips and tricks to stick to the budget and help us do that. Setting a budget and sticking to a. One of the first things is helpful to know is how much you spent last year. If you don't know, you may consider estimating last year's expenses for each category and save this years receiver next year's budgeting to help plan. Once you have your expenses, try to look for areas we overspend and then wait to turn that down. Next, make a list of holiday purchases and events you plan to spend money on this year. Consider all of your major spending categories such as gifts, entertaining, meals, travel. Then estimate how much you can afford to spend in each category. Engage in accountability partner to stick to your plan. Know your limit and tremulous. Make a list of those you will buy for. Family members, establish a mutually agreed-upon giftgiving plan with spending limits. Sometimes it's easy to go over to try to compete with other friends or family. Consider more economical options for giftgiving. Maybe it will go to the gift exchange and focus on the kids. Or you can

draw names versus buying for everyone. Buying less expensive white elephant gifts or even the as seen on TV gifts. If you're struggling to cut back when you know you should, ask yourself, what what is driving me to need to give excessively. At a spending limit and a few gift ideas for each. Try to resist the urge to keep up with overzealous gift givers. >> Plan had. Do your research before making your purchases. Look for any special saving dates at your favorite stores. Use coupons from newspaper, online or in store. Take advantage of free shipping and online purchases. Next list out specific saving options and coupons. Take your gift list and determine where to make your purchases based on the deals you collected. Having a plan is very important. Be sure to group gifts together to take advantage of spending requirements such as \$75 get 25% off and free shipping. Retail websites are great ways to compare prices and you can do that easily online. Getting creative and joining together. Consider online shopping and gift cards for low stress convenience to resist tendency to go over spending limits. And heading to the store, consider using prepaid gift cards is more difficult to go over your limit. Once your money is gone you're done shopping. Many have talents we may not tap into. Consider handmade gifts are gifts of time and talent. These are often more meaningful to recipients and there are lot of great ideas online. Join forces with other family members or coworkers to help others in need of adopting a family or volunteering your time. As an alternative to primary giftgiving, hopefully these ideas that are helpful giving food for thought. Most important, member to take that timeout for yourself during the busy time of shopping which can be stressful in and of itself.

This holiday season can be a great time to celebrate. And can be a time of feelings, just as he spoke about earlier. Anxiety, guilt and shame due to overeating and weight gain. We will go over practical strategies to achieve a healthier balance. Exercises a great holiday distress or. We talked about the importance of keeping that regular exercise schedule, it's a great distress are. This can be an opportunity to re-energize yourself. Or spend time with friends and family. Practice mindful eating. Once you have your plates, find a spot to sit down, get comfortable and enjoy. Focus on your eating.'s a ring and enjoy the food. Pacer self and once you're done eating, focus your thoughts away from food and onto other activities. Such as visiting with friends or family, playing games, watching movie, reading. Any type of distraction. Use caution with beverages. Alcohol can lessen inhibitions and induce overeating. Nonalcoholic beverages can be full of calories and sugar. Drink water with lemon in between those high-calorie or alcoholic drinks.

For many of us, one of the biggest risks is expended time and can occasionally spend with friends and family. Some of the people we see during this time of year we only communicate with during special occasions such as the holidays.

Melanie has another poll question to be making about it. I think she will introduce that.

How much stress do you anticipate you will have as a result of spending more time communicating the family during the holidays? There is none, minor increase, water increase or major increase. 14% say none at all, 32% minor, 36% moderate and 60% major.

What can we do to help mitigate that stress relief some of that stress. Having those expectations can be helpful. You may need to ask yourself critical questions such as is it realistic to agree to spend expended time with a toxic relative you share high conflict history with? If you're uncomfortable with your relatives to drink excessively, should you agree to spend time with them without having an exit strategy? This is a time maybe difficult conversations with friends and family Christmas have different values. We need to determine how and when we would like to engage with those family members.'s help to think of that ahead of time and build that into your expectations that you have.

Determine your boundaries and stick to them. Each planned holiday event, gather the details, determinist two plan in your emotional health and stress level. Accepting others may not understand or agree with your decision and that is okay. Your health, safety and values are all important. If you feel uncomfortable with an event because it conflicts with the is, it's okay to decline. Expressing expectations ahead of time can also be an important step. You may ask friends and family who are ill to join virtually rather than in person. If masks are required to make consider having a box of disposable masks on hand. >> Really thinking about your health, safety and values. Even if they are different from others. How to accept family members and friends as they are. Even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Try to avoid using the holidays to could someone else. Practice understanding when others appear unduly upset or distress. This is a very difficult and stressful time for a lot of people. Likely those are feeling the stress of holidays as well. These are great ways to stay connected. Sometimes things can get lost in translation. Before responding to a tech email or voicemail they may find upsetting, take a step back and gain perspective. It's a stressful time for many of us. It can be a valuable gift even when it's difficult.

Try to properly tackle any unfinished business. If this unresolved conflict with another family member, you know you will see over the holidays, try to reach out in advance and try to resolve it. This'll help reduce participatory stress and awkwardness during the holidays. If mentors cannot be resolved or there's potential for triggering, it could be beneficial to speak with a mental health professional to sort out feelings and process your emotions. You could talk through your issues, feelings and concerns and make practical decisions about how you will spend your holidays and who you will spend them with. Your EAP can be a great starting point. We will discuss the details at the end of the presentation.

Another thing to consider is having those difficult conversations which they have alluded to earlier. Having those ahead of time or at least thinking about those ahead of time can be helpful. Having a strategy for addressing those. We talked about honoring our own values and rulings of safety even when they are difference from those of others. Let's talk about being overcommitted. In the opening coal poll, someone mentioned the hustle and bustle of the holidays. Being overcommitted and overstressed is a very common feeling. Let's take a look at preventative tips. Setting your priorities. Evaluate the circumstances surrounding your holidays. Your work schedule, travel plans, your yearly traditions , visiting relatives, party invitations. Take a look at all of those and prioritize what's most important to you. Then make plans accordingly. Take into consideration the feelings of safety during holiday gatherings. This

year again will be different. You may not do everything you may do or me look very different that doesn't mean connection is no longer important. Events, and maybe as important or more important. The other gathering may occur over zoom, in person, each of those can be meaningful. This year, maybe their relatives you may not be able to see in person. Maybe share some pictures or stories. Even though it may not be able to get together. There are still ways to connect. Those are still meaningful. Learning to say no. We talked about this in earlier slides. The ability to say no and set limits are essential for navigating the holidays. Don't be afraid to use small words to keep holiday commitments and obligations at a manageable level. Adding those extra gifts, or traveling long distances, you have to make the decision and choices healthiest for you. This is healthy boundary settings and practicing good self-care. Sometimes it can be difficult but again, it's important you make the choices that are right for you. Remember the fun. This is what we talked about in the beginning of that intention of having a joyful holiday experience. Hopefully we can focus on the fun and enjoyment of the season. There are times when we have to choose less enjoyable commitments. It's also important to balance these with fun and joyful activities. If you examine your holiday plan and you find you're not seeing fun in your, it could be time to re-examine, time to build in those fun activities, those moments of joy, moments of connection that make the holidays a fun and meaningful experience. >> I believe now Melanie will introduce our last poll question here.

Yes. I went to find out from people what you are takeaway is from this. What you think you would do differently so you can drive this holiday season? Go ahead and share that with us here. >> Relaxing. Learning to say no, that's a big one. Plan to get organize. Not being afraid to say no to commitment. Prioritizing. Giving myself a break. Take time for rest when I need it. Stay away from toxic people if possible. Taking time to relax and take care of myself. Communicate. Manage my finances better. Talking to a family member they have issues with. And discuss it looks like lots of people thinking about saying no to commitments or some of the things around the holiday season. I was going to just thinking about that ahead of time. It can be helpful to having a script. Let's talk about in the beginning we have in our poll question some feelings people had expressed about feeling isolated during this holiday season this is particularly true during COVID-19. What are some ways we can still connects during this holiday season and have those meaningful experiences? Can we be useful for online phone support groups. There a lot of those happening. Your EAP can be valuable in helping you find resources that can help you connect. Again, trying to access those virtual platforms like using zoom or calling over the phone. Again, maybe reaching out to find those support groups that can be helpful. Sharing interests. The in person gatherings are little bit different this year because of COVID-19. Once again, there are ways to connect that may be different than in person. That can still be meaningful. Maybe the challenge this year is finding those and finding how to connect with those because it is possible even though it may look different.

Thank you so much. I want to remind everyone about your EAP benefits that are available. This could be a rough time of year for people in many different ways and we are challenged more this year than we have been in a long time. Just remember your benefits of there for you. They are prepaid by your employer. Their confidential, no one knows you have used your benefits unless you ask us to release that information. You can call toll-free with your

company toll-free phone number . If you're not sure what that is, reach out to your HR department. You can get us on the web at your company's member website so both of those you can receive from your HR department if you don't know what they are. Feel free to call and if you have questions about this or any other health and wellness topic, we are here to help you get through those situations. It looks like we have a few minutes for questions and we will see if we have any. We are getting questions about the recording.

We will have the recording available. We will have the recording available on 2-3 business days on your member website. If you don't know your member website, reach out to your HR department to find out that information. Looks like we have someone who made a comment about the holiday spending. From my family, we call it goodwill holiday. The game is to see who can spend the least by making my buying secondhand, etc. It has been so much fun it turns out to be a competition to see who can spend the least. That's a great idea.

I knew someone who was an artist he made portraits , they specialized in pet portraits. They did when were all members of their family. It was a gift of their time and talent and they were amazing. We all have a lot of hidden talents we could bring out this holiday season.

I'm going to head and pull up our closing poll question. Please feel free to rate your overall satisfaction for today's webinar. Please click on the radio button, and that will broadcasted to S. We are not broadcasting these out to everyone. We also have a certificate of completion available now. If you click on the handout you can click the download button or highlight it and go down to the bottom and click on download file. That will generate a new window to open your Internet browser. You may want to open that and download the certificate of completion and you can use those same steps for the handouts. >> Melanie says her family is making gifts. There's something really personal wealth that. Is going to save taking, someone says they bake a lot. They make mobile's and there was lot of those celebrating new arrivals and babies and that could be a great gift, making a mobile.

Someone reminded us, remember to buy local from local stores that are smaller.

That could be even more important during this unique holiday season and year. Volunteering is also a wonderful way to spend time and reach out and celebrate the holiday season. >> It doesn't look like we have any more questions. Lots of people giving comments. And saying they had a lot of great tips. I'm glad you're able to take some of those away and we really hope this is useful and helpful over the season. Don't forget about your EAP. We are here to help you beyond today. Feel free to call in. We will go ahead and wrap this up since we don't have any further questions. We want to thank you all for joining today. The handouts are available here for those asking, you click on the handout to highlight, that will cause the download file button to light up at the bottom of the pod. That will open a new window in your Internet browser or you hover over the handout and click on download handout. That will open another window. You want to open that and download the handout. You will follow the steps to download. Thank you so much for attending period thank you for sharing your expertise. It was wonderful and I hope all of you have a great holiday season.

Thank you everyone, thank you for your time. >> [Event Concluded] [Event Concluded]