

HEALTH & WELLNESS

How to Make a Stressful Holiday More Mindful



ADVERTISEMENT

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Tackling Food Insecurity in the meal-centered holiday season

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Black Women are Dying and Surviving Breast Cancer

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Brooklyn Savvy Marks its 20th Year

HEALTH & WELLNESS

AG Letitia James Leads Bi-Partisan Coalition in Suit Against TikTok

HEALTH & WELLNESS

How to Make a Stressful Holiday More Mindful



Left: Dr. Tolu Olupona, MD, Right: Dr. Jamila Codrington, PhD

Fern Gillespie

The Thanksgiving, Christmas, Kwanzaa and New Year holiday season is an emotional roller coaster ride for many people. The year-end season which embraces family, joy and sharing, can also be a season of stress. A survey by the American Psychological Association shows that nearly 9 in 10 U.S. adults say something causes them stress this time of year. Our Time Press reached out to leading experts on mental health, who are based in Brooklyn.

Dr. Tolu Olupona, MD, a psychiatrist who is board certified in child, adolescent and adult psychiatry and is currently Program Director of Psychiatry Training at One Brooklyn Health Interfaith Medical Center and President of the Brooklyn Psychiatry Society.

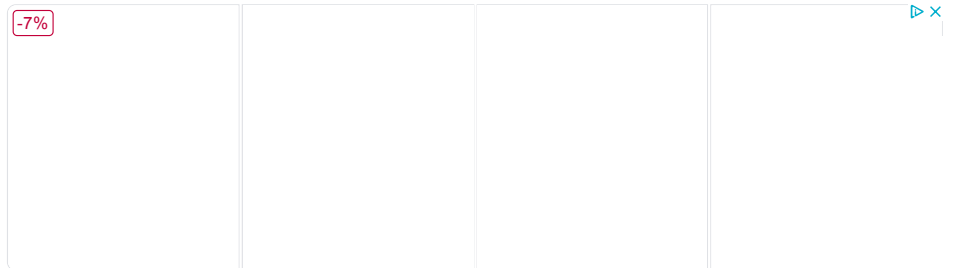
Dr. Jamila Codrington is a New York state-licensed psychologist specializing in children, adolescents, and families, who is Supervising Psychologist at Astor Services for Children and Families and former

What advice do you have for parents on dealing with children’s stress during the holidays?

Dr. Tolu Olupona, MD

“Children are very sensitive to the mood and anxiety level of parents. They are like a sponge. Parents need to take care of themselves with self-care. They need to be a role-model on how to handle stress. Parents need to manage expectations. Kids have ideas on Christmas and what they want for the holiday. I think parents need to have a conversation early with kids to manage expectations and what will happen and what will not. So the kids don’t get their hopes up and get disappointed if things don’t go their way. Continue to encourage the children and adolescents to maintain a strict routine. Even though they’re home for the holidays doesn’t mean that they should stay up and keep watching TV or being on social media disrupting their sleep schedule.”

ADVERTISEMENT



Complete your collection
eBay

Dr. Jamila Codrington, PhD

“Adding structure to the holiday break introduces a level of predictability, which helps keep tension and anxieties down. Knowing what comes next helps young people to more effectively manage their emotions and behaviors and minimizes the parenting stress that can come from constantly redirecting a child who is in vacation mode and off their schedule. Being overly rigid can take the joyful spirit out of the holidays, but adding light structure to bedtime, mealtime, screen time, creative projects, play, learning opportunities, and family activities can work wonders in helping caregivers prevent stress overload.”

Dr. Tolu Olupona, MD

“Taking care of oneself first. The less stressed you are. The less angry you are.

The more regulated you are. The easier it is to have a good buffer. To handle whatever is being thrown at you. Be aware of triggers. Get into extreme self-care. It could be sleep, exercise, walks, prayer, meditation, and yoga. Put extra time into making sure these routines are in place. Before going into complicated family dynamics prepare for certain difficult situations with someone who might be bringing up a difficult topic. You could prepare your answers. Feel joy.

Look for the positives in the situation. No matter what’s going on, the positivity is the fact that everyone is there and together. Shifting the focus from everything that’s wrong and reframing it, and thinking about all of the things that are right.”

Dr. Jamila Codrington, PhD

“We may not be able to get out of attending drama-filled family gatherings over the holidays, but we can prepare for it by “coping ahead” – a therapeutic strategy that involves anticipating challenging situations and preparing effective coping strategies in advance. We know our families well, along with the common conversation pitfalls.

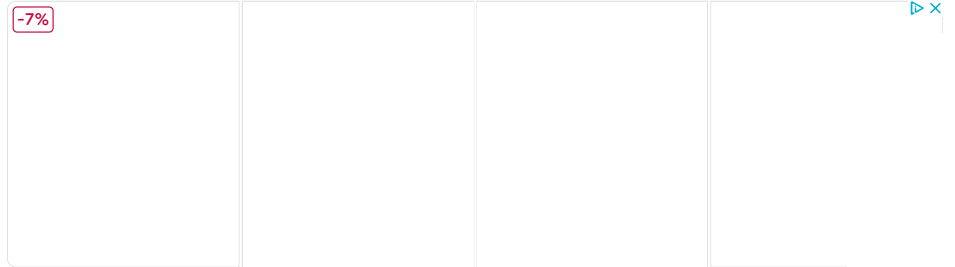
We can mentally walk ourselves through a possibly challenging scenario, identify the specific triggering comments or physical states in your body that signal we are close to the edge, and plan and rehearse specific strategies that can be used to de-escalate the conflict just before the breaking point. Some strategies to try are politely requesting to take a break and regroup later when emotions die down, engaging in deep, rhythmic breathing to calm down your stress-response system, and distracting yourself with an important task (such as food prep, monitoring children, or feeding a pet) to interrupt a cycle of negative thinking that can exacerbate the anger.”

What are the symptoms of Xmas holidays and winter depression? What are some solutions to avoid the depression?

Dr. Jamila Codrington, PhD

The season for holiday blues is upon us, as people struggle to balance work demands before end-of-year deadlines, family commitments,

ADVERTISEMENT



Complete your collection
eBay

This time of year also brings reduced daylight and colder weather that can contribute to feelings of sadness, anxiety, low energy, social withdrawal, sleep and appetite changes, and even loss of interest in activities typically enjoyed. To prevent seasonal depression this winter, we can use relaxation techniques like meditation, deep breathing, or yoga, plan mood-boosting experiences with energy givers who uplift our spirits, spend more time outdoors to increase exposure to natural sunlight, or even use full spectrum light bulbs that can help mimic natural light in the home or office.

Is it realistic to have New Year’s resolutions?

Dr. Tolu Olupona, MD

“A New Year’s resolution is a way to stay on track of one’s vision for one’s life. I think a New Year’s resolution is a way of setting a vision of where you want to be. Whether it’s your health life, family life, financial life, social life –whatever it is. I think what sometimes happens is that we’re focused on the goal that we want and if we don’t achieve it, we’re disappointed. Our habits that are going to help us achieve what we want. More focus on the habits—whether daily, weekly, monthly—that will lead you to the achievement of your resolution.

I think when we spend time on habits, structure, and practices it increases achieving the resolution. As opposed to just having the resolution and not having a plan. There’s a whole concept of goal setting where we’re setting SMART goals. The S stands for being specific about what you want to achieve. M is for measuring it and tracking the goal.