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## Coping with the Holidays



The seasons of Advent and Christmas, supposedly the most joyful times of the year, may be especially difficult for people dealing with personal loss, grief, loneliness, acute and chronic illnesses, financial hardship, and marital issues like separation or divorce. Depression and anxiety may be intensified by popular culture perceptions about how Christmas *should* feel like. Reverend Susan Gregg-Schroeder, Coordinator of Mental Health Ministries in San Diego, CA, authored the pamphlet, *Mental Illness: Coping with the Holidays*, to offer helpful tips for limiting holiday stress especially for persons living with mental illness.

### Tips for persons living with a mental illness:

- Remember the importance of self care.
- Maintain regular routines for sleeping, eating, and exercise.
- Keep appointments with mental health professionals and support groups.
- When overwhelmed by large group gatherings, excuse yourself for some quiet time alone.
- Take advantage of opportunities to help others to keep your own problems in perspective.
- Find joy in the present; let go of past regrets.

### How faith communities can help:

- Make a special effort to invite all to Church, especially people who are struggling.
- Share familiar Scripture stories and hymns to bring comfort to those who feel disconnected from their faith community.
- Be aware of silent sufferers who may be afraid to share their pain.
- Contact shelters and community mental health centers in your area for wish list donation opportunities.
- Visit parishioners who can't leave their home, residential placement or hospital with a token gift from your parish to help them know they are not forgotten.

Go to the following sites for a printable PDF of the complete pamphlet, *Mental Illness: Coping with the Holidays*

in English:

[http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/links\\_resources/brochures/holidays.pdf](http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/links_resources/brochures/holidays.pdf)

in Spanish:

[http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/links\\_resources/brochures/holidays\\_spanish.pdf](http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/links_resources/brochures/holidays_spanish.pdf)

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