

Tips to Get Ready for the Holidays in 2021

Holidays can take students away from friends and their usual school supports.

Changes to routine can cause some young people to feel stressed, isolated and alone. Parent support is very important at this time. There is also some information that may help you to identify when your young person might need some extra support and where to go for help.

There are a number of ways you can support your young person's mental health and wellbeing in the holidays:

1. Encourage them to stay connected

Social relationships are important to you and to your young person's general wellbeing. During this time that is a challenge. Even a phone call, email, text message or Facebook message can help them to feel connected to friends and family. **Family reading time!**

It is okay if they take time out for themselves at times, but encourage them to keep in contact with friends and family over the holidays.

Friends can provide both play and support, and spending time with friends is also important for keeping and building on existing friendships.

2. Encourage them to stay involved

Participate with them when you can. Have a family night or an activity just for you and your child. Involve them in decisions and give them responsibility at home (e.g. deciding what to eat for dinner or baking and helping to prepare it). Help them to identify and set realistic goals. Setting and achieving realistic goals can be incredibly motivating and can help build self-confidence.

3. Encourage physical activity

Physical activity is important for everyone's health and wellbeing. If your young person is feeling down or finding things are difficult, physical activity may be the last thing they feel like doing. But even small activities, like walking around the block, can help relieve stress and frustration, provide a good distraction from

worrying thoughts, improve concentration and improve mood.

If your young person is struggling to get active, find a physical activity that you both enjoy and can do together (e.g. walking, sledding, shoveling snow) and make a plan to do it regularly.

4. Encourage a regular routine

Getting a good night's sleep helps young people to feel energised, focused and motivated. Adolescence is a time when a number of changes to the "body clock" impact on sleeping patterns and young people are more likely to have problems with sleep. Developing a sleeping routine can help. Encourage your young person to wake up around the same time each day, get out of bed when they wake up, and go to bed around the same time each night. Avoiding caffeine after lunchtime, having a quiet, dark and uncluttered bedroom and shutting down electronic devices before bed can also help them to get a good night's sleep.

5. Encourage healthy eating habits

Eating well doesn't only reduce the risk of physical health problems, like heart disease and diabetes, but it can also help with sleeping patterns, energy levels, mood, and general health and wellbeing.

A good balanced diet with less junk food/ lots of sugars and more vegies, fruit, whole grains and plenty of water will ensure your young person has all of the vitamins and minerals to help their body and brain function well.

6. Encourage play!

Devoting time to just having fun can help to recharge your young person's battery, and reduce stress and anxiety. Fun activities could be building a snow people, playing cards, playing board games, baking, art, figures in the snow, snow forts, snow ball fights etc.

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Tips to help you support your young person

1. **Recognise** their distress or concerning behaviour
2. **Ask** them about it (e.g. “I’ve noticed you seem to be sad a lot at the moment.”)
3. **Acknowledge** their feelings (e.g. “That seems like a really hard place to be in /I can understand why you are upset about that.”)
4. **Get appropriate support** and encourage healthy coping strategies (e.g. “Do you need some help to handle this?”)
5. **Check in** a short time afterwards to see how they are going.



Signs that may suggest that your young person is struggling

It is normal for young people to have ups and downs. However changes in mood, levels of participation and thinking patterns which persist for more than a couple of weeks may indicate that your young person needs extra support.

Changes in mood include:

- Being irritable or angry with friends or family for no apparent reason
- Feeling tense, restless, stressed or worried
- Crying for no apparent reason, feeling sad or down for long periods of time

Changes in activity include:

- Not enjoying or not wanting to be involved in things they would normally enjoy
- Being involved in risky behaviour they would normally avoid
- Unusual sleeping or eating habits

Changes in thinking include:

- Having a lot of negative thoughts
- Expressing distorted thoughts about themselves and the world (e.g. everything seeming bad and pointless).

If you believe that your young person is at risk of harm you should seek professional support from your family doctor or a doctor at a clinic, mental health service or emergency department at the University Hospital Northern BC.

24 HOUR CRISIS LINES

Provincial

TTY • [1-866-872-0113](tel:1-866-872-0113)

310Mental Health Support (24hours) • [310-6789](tel:310-6789)

1-800-SUICIDE • [1-800-784-2433](tel:1-800-784-2433)

Online Service for Adults (12pm – 1 pm) • www.CrisisCentreChat.ca

Online Service for Youth (12 pm – 1 am) • www.YouthinBC.com

[Kids Help Phone](tel:1-800-668-6868) (Text CONNECT to 686868)

911

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We know that many parents are going to be working overtime this year to find new ways to recreate the holidays to not lose the magic of the season. We know you want to keep the sparkle in your kids' eyes, to keep them engaged and connected. With the support of our network of child and youth mental health experts, we have rounded up some tips and ideas to help your family support your child's mental health and manage the holidays in a pandemic.



Prioritize mental health in the holidays

Even in a typical year, the holidays can be an especially challenging time of year for many families. Expectations of the holidays can be hard on children– and, let's face it, it's not 'the happiest time' for all of us. When you prioritize your or your child's mental wellness, you can focus on what works for your family.

As a parent, consider the things that feel realistic for you to do and then offer those choices to kids/youth to pick from. So many of us struggle with saying *no* over the holidays – perhaps this year, you will feel confident about not over committing your schedule and slowing things down; and that's ok! Also, keep in mind that having time to connect with each other is important, but so, too, is having space for everyone to have their own personal time.



Plan Early

Routines and predictability are often beneficial (within reason) for children and youth with mental health challenges. It's a good time to start having conversations with children about what the holidays may look like so that they understand things will be different this year and they know what to expect. This also allows them to be a part of the new planning process. What is important to them? Is there something new they would like to try? Planning early also gives us time to let other relatives or friends know in advance to manage their expectations, too. Also, consider connecting with the parents of your children's friend to arrange days before or after the holidays for play dates, either virtually or in-person/outdoors, depending on local public health advice. This can include coming up with a list of outdoor winter activities.



Focus on What's in Your Control

While we are all doing our part to manage the pandemic, so much of what is happening in the province – and the world – is out of our control right now. This is a good time to focus on the things that are in your control. When it comes to traditions of the holiday season, consider how you can incorporate the traditions, or at least parts of those traditions, that are most important to your family. What are some of the things your family can do to

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bring a little holiday magic into your home? It could be a simple thing like baking cookies, preparing a special family recipe, or planning for a holiday nature walk as a way to get outdoors and move. If seeing family is important to you, consider the ways you can do that, for example, setting up Zoom while your different households have a special meal. It won't be the same, but that doesn't mean you won't enjoy it.



Managing Disappointment

For a lot of us, we are going to need to accept that the holidays just won't be what they usually are. That will be disappointing for a lot of children (and parents!) It's important to acknowledge that disappointment, especially for children. Give kids a safe space to share their feelings and be heard; let them know this is hard for you, too. Reminding your kids – and yourself – that this is a temporary measure in a very unusual time may make it all feel a little less daunting



Supporting children through grief.

The holidays can be especially hard for families who are grieving. Remembering your loved one, telling stories, and laughing about good times together are all ok to do, and can provide comfort to your child. You might work together to come up with ideas for memorializing your loved one over the

holiday. Remember that it's okay for you child/youth to feel upset as there have been a lot of different types of loss this year.



Take Care of You

The holidays can be a stressful and anxious time for parents, too. Make sure that you are eating, sleeping and enjoying the holidays as well. Maintain healthy boundaries. Take time when you need it, don't feel guilty saying no when you need to. Do what is best for you and your family. Consider planning a day where the family could play a game or watch a movie together. But don't forget to have some scheduled time where kids can play games and parents can take some time out as well.



Don't Underestimate Your Family's Resilience

Resilience is about bouncing back from challenges, rather than not having any challenges at all. Look back on your year. What are some of the things you and your family have done to get through this? What is working? What doesn't work? How have you changed as a parent? Your kids are watching you model behaviour and your resilience is teaching them. Notice what works for your family – and remember that this will look different for each family.

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NB: Dec. 8, 2021 The specifics of hours of operation for our local community agencies is not yet available. The SD57 District Mental Health Behaviour Team will get it out to our schools as soon as we have it. For now this is basic information.

Prince George Community Agencies:

The Crisis lines operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Northern BC Crisis Line 1-888-562-1214 or 250 563 -1214

Youth Crisis line (TEXT) 250-564-8336/188-564-8336

Youth Support Chat 250 – 564 – 8336 (TEXT) or

Online chat:

<https://www.northerncrisissuicide.ca/>

(Text and online are open Daily 4 pm – 10 pm daily. If we are ever offline between this time we are experiencing technical difficulties.)

Foundry PG/Youth Around Prince

250-645-4010 1160 7th Ave

YAP

Foundry

DROP –IN Support daily 11 am – 3 pm at the YAP office

Daily services (8:30 am – 4:30pm): showers, laundry, food, internet, email, counselling, and support

Intersect Youth and Family Services

250-562-6639 or 250-617-2691

9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Prince George Native Centre – Native Healing Centre

250-564-4324
1600 3rd Ave, PG

Reconnect Youth Village

250-562-2538

171 George St.

Daily Services: 24 hours services: crisis support, outreach, showers, laundry, food, emergency housing

Carrier Sekani Family Services

250-562-3591

Toll Free: 1-800-889-6855

Youth Services in PG

250-564-5643

1575-2nd Ave

Provincial:

Anxiety Canada: www.anxietycanada.com

Kelty mental Health Resource Centre

Peer support for families and youth

Toll-free: 1-800-665-1822

www.keltymentalhealth.ca

www.healthymindsbc.gov.bc.ca

Foundry Online tools and information:

www.Foundrybc.ca/info-tools/

Foundry Virtual – Get Support online

1-833-308-6379 or

Email: online@foundrybc.ca