Navigating the Holiday Season

Well-being, practical support, and community resources for employees and household members.



There is no “right” way to experience the holidays.

For some, this season brings joy; for others, stress, grief, financial pressure, or loneliness. All of these experiences deserve care and support.

Start with what matters most to you

Check in with yourself

Identify what feels most difficult right now: emotions, money, relationships, caregiving, or time.

Choose manageable expectations

Prioritize what is meaningful. It is okay to change plans, simplify traditions, or decline invitations.

Keep everyday routines

Make space for sleep, meals, movement, connection, and breaks when possible.

Ask for support early

Reach out to a trusted person, a local community organization, or a qualified professional when needed.

Finding support in this guide

2 Grief & family dynamics

3 Financial planning

4 Holiday assistance

5 Caregiving & work-life balance

6 Support & next steps

The holiday season looks different for everyone. Whether you celebrate, observe different traditions, or do not participate in holidays, your well-being matters.

Grief, Family Dynamics & Emotional Well-Being

Navigate loss, challenging relationships, and seasonal expectations with care and flexibility.



The holidays may bring feelings of grief, loneliness, or stress related to complicated family relationships and gatherings.

It's okay to honor meaningful traditions, set boundaries, or choose different ways to spend the season.

Practical approaches

Honor grief and changing traditions

Acknowledge feelings of loss, remember loved ones in meaningful ways, or create new traditions that feel comfortable.

Set healthy boundaries

Decide which gatherings, conversations, and commitments feel manageable. It's okay to decline invitations or leave early.

Navigate difficult interactions

Plan ways to redirect uncomfortable conversations, take breaks, or seek support when family tensions arise.

Connect in ways that feel right

Consider a phone call, time with supportive friends, a community activity, or a quieter celebration instead of a stressful gathering.

Helpful information & support

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988 for free, confidential crisis support, including when you feel overwhelmed.

Website

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Guidance for coping with grief, finding support groups, and connecting with community resources when loss affects emotional well-being.

Website

Financial Stress & Community Assistance

Plan around essential needs and explore help that may be available locally.



Holiday expectations can intensify costs for food, travel, gifts, housing, and utilities.

Support may be available even when holiday-specific programs are not.

Ways to reduce financial pressure

Prioritize essentials

Review housing, food, utilities, and transportation needs before nonessential seasonal expenses.

Make a realistic spending plan

Set limits for gifts, meals, and travel; consider free or low-cost ways to connect.

Communicate expectations

Discuss shared costs or gift exchanges early, and suggest simpler alternatives.

Watch for financial scams

Pause before responding to urgent requests for money, charitable donations, or unfamiliar links.

Programs and community directories

211 — Community Assistance

Dial 211 to find local food, housing, utility, and other essential-needs programs.

Website

Findhelp

Search by ZIP code for food assistance, housing, financial support, and other local programs.

Website

Feeding America — Find Food

Locate food banks and local hunger-relief partners.

Website

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

Find budgeting and money-management tools and consumer information.

Website

Holiday & Community Assistance

Find seasonal meals, gifts, winter clothing, and nearby help. Availability varies by location.

Seasonal programs may offer food, toys, coats, and other essentials.

Apply early where required; local eligibility, registration deadlines, and available supplies vary.



National starting points

Click resource titles for websites

The Salvation Army — Local Services

Find nearby programs that may offer meals, holiday gifts, food, clothing, utility help, or community assistance.

Marine Toys for Tots — Local Campaigns

Find a local campaign to ask about holiday toy requests, application dates, and eligibility for children.

Meals on Wheels America

Search by ZIP code for local meal and nutrition programs serving eligible older adults.

One Warm Coat — Local Coat Partners

Find nonprofit partners that may distribute free winter coats. Availability is not guaranteed; call ahead.

Where else to ask locally

Local food banks & pantries

Ask about holiday groceries, community meals, and winter food distributions.

Libraries, schools & community groups

Ask about coat drives, toy programs, seasonal events, and free or low-cost activities.

Confirm before visiting

Contact programs directly to confirm hours, locations, eligibility, application steps, registration deadlines, and available supplies.

Family, Caregiving & Work-Life Balance

Navigate overlapping responsibilities with practical planning and flexibility.



School breaks, caregiving, work schedules, travel, and family expectations may all compete for time.

Small changes and shared planning can help.

Helpful planning ideas

Map out care needs

Identify days when children, older adults, or other family members may need additional support.

Share responsibilities

Ask family, friends, or trusted community supports to help with meals, transportation, or care where possible.

Consider flexible arrangements

If appropriate, discuss scheduling, time off, or workload needs with your employer.

Plan for interruptions

Keep key contacts, medication details, travel information, and backup arrangements accessible.

Caregiving and family resources

Caregiver Action Network

Practical information and support tools for family caregivers.

Website

Eldercare Locator

Call 1-800-677-1116 to connect with local services for older adults and caregivers.

Website

Child Care Aware of America

Learn how to find childcare options and local referral agencies.

Website

Family Caregiver Alliance

Caregiver education, planning tools, and resources to balance care needs with everyday responsibilities.

Website

Support Beyond the Holiday Season

Choose one practical next step, and explore additional tools as needed.

Finding Ongoing Support

Connect with community services

Local community centers, libraries, nonprofit organizations, and faith-based groups may offer year-round activities, support programs, and opportunities to connect.

Explore ongoing assistance

If you need continued help with food, housing, utilities, or other essentials, contact local assistance programs about eligibility and available services.

Find emotional support

Consider reaching out to a trusted person, support group, or qualified mental health professional if stress, grief, or feelings of isolation continue.

Small Steps Moving Forward

Identify what would help most

Choose one realistic action, such as contacting a community organization, exploring a support program, or making time for connection.



What would make this week more manageable?

Support is available, and taking even one small step toward getting help can make a difference.

The resource listings provided are for informational purposes only and are not intended as endorsements, referrals, or recommendations of any programs, providers, or services. Carelon Behavioral Health makes no representations or warranties regarding the quality, suitability, or outcomes of the listed resources. It is the sole responsibility of the individual to evaluate and select any providers or programs based on their own judgment and due diligence.