

Today's topic is taking care of ourselves and others during the Christmas period.

The holiday season, especially around Christmas, is often portrayed as a time of joy, family gatherings, and celebrations. However, it can also be a period of heightened stress, loneliness, and mental health challenges for many.

Amidst the festivities, it's crucial to recognize the importance of taking care of our mental health and looking out for others.

### **Understanding the Mental Health Challenges of the Holiday Season**

The holiday season can bring a unique set of stressors, including financial pressure, family dynamics, and the struggle to meet societal expectations of happiness and togetherness. For those who have experienced loss or are dealing with mental health issues, this time can amplify feelings of sadness, anxiety, or isolation.

### **Self-Care Strategies**

1. **Set Realistic Expectations:** It's important to remember that it's okay not to have a 'perfect' holiday. Be realistic about what you can achieve and give yourself permission to set boundaries.
2. **Maintain Healthy Routines:** Try to stick to your regular routines as much as possible, including sleep, exercise, and eating habits. Consistency can provide a sense of stability and control.
3. **Mindful Spending:** Financial stress can be a significant burden. Plan your spending carefully and remember that meaningful connections are more valuable than material gifts.
4. **Take Time for Yourself:** Make sure to carve out time for activities that relax and rejuvenate you. Whether it's reading, taking a walk, or heading to the beach, self-care is crucial.

5. **Seek Support if Needed:** Don't hesitate to reach out to mental health professionals if you're feeling overwhelmed. There's no shame in seeking help.

Resources such as [Incolink Counselling](#) and [Incolink's Bluehats Suicide Prevention Initiative](#) helps workers who are doing it tough by providing someone to talk to.

Construction work is unique and Bluehats can be the circuit breaker, by providing support if things feel like they are getting out of control.

### **Lifeworks EAP**

[CICA also provide a free well-being platform as well as an Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) for its member companies and their staff.

### **Supporting Others**

1. **Reach Out:** Check in with family members, friends, and even neighbours, especially those who may be alone or going through a tough time.
2. **Be a Good Listener:** Sometimes, all a person needs is a willing ear. Listen without judgment and offer support where you can.
3. **Encourage Professional Help if Necessary:** If you notice someone struggling significantly with their mental health, gently encourage them to seek professional support.
4. **Plan Inclusive Activities:** Organize low-stress, inclusive activities that can bring people together in a relaxed environment, like a casual get-together.
5. **Educate Yourself:** Understanding the signs of mental health struggles can better equip you to support others. Education can also help in destigmatizing mental health issues.

### **Conclusion**

The festive season, while joyous for many, can also be a challenging time for mental health. It's vital to approach this period with kindness and



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understanding towards ourselves and others. By implementing self-care strategies and extending our support to those around us, we can all contribute to a more inclusive and mentally healthy holiday environment.

Remember, taking care of mental health is not just a seasonal concern but a year-round commitment. Let this holiday season be a reminder of the importance of nurturing our mental well-being and that of our community.

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