

The following tips were collected by NAMI Connection facilitators from all over the U.S.

TIPS FOR COPING WITH ANY HOLIDAY

- ❖ Stay close to family and friends who understand your illness.
- ❖ Take your medications as prescribed.
- ❖ Be sure to get the sleep you need.
- ❖ Celebrate the holidays in ways that are comfortable for you.
- ❖ Holidays do not stop feelings of sadness and loneliness; give yourself permission to work through these feelings.
- ❖ Don't compare this holiday with previous ones.
- ❖ Enjoy all the little things you have now.
- ❖ Talk about the stress you feel with family and friends.
- ❖ Keep expectations manageable.
- ❖ Plan your work and work your plan.
- ❖ If it is a gift-giving holiday, set a budget and stick with it. Many items that you can give do not cost money – a phone call to a friend may mean more.
- ❖ Do something nice for someone else. Do something nice for yourself.
- ❖ Stay out of department stores.
- ❖ Play your favorite music.
- ❖ Celebrate in a way that is comfortable for you.
- ❖ Surround yourself with close friends who understand your feelings about the holiday.
- ❖ Reflect on positive memories from the past year and try to build on them.
- ❖ Don't allow yourself to dwell on the negative. If negative thoughts come, acknowledge them and let them go. Return to a positive thought or memory. Don't beat yourself up for having a negative thought.

Remember that the holidays do not magically banish all reasons for feeling sad and lonely; sometimes holidays can seem to magnify those feelings. It can be a little easier to get through the holidays when you look for things to appreciate and focus your thoughts on those positive things.

- ❖ Don't dwell on past losses.
- ❖ Do work through unresolved grief.
- ❖ Do remember that there will be a difference between the ideal holiday and the reality of one's life. Try not to dwell on any disappointment you may experience.
- ❖ Don't accept the role of victim – get out of the house if you can and enjoy the sunshine (when you have it) and fresh air.
- ❖ Remember, celebrations are what you make them – and make them comfortable for you. Create new (comfortable) memories.