



American
Brain Tumor
Association

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The American Brain Tumor Association (ABTA) Offers Tips for Coping with Holiday Stress, Emotions

Des Plaines, Ill. (Dec. 3, 2008) – If you are living with a brain tumor, caring for someone with a brain tumor or other serious illness, or have recently lost a family member or close friend, the holidays can be stressful, overwhelming, and difficult.

To help, the licensed social workers at the American Brain Tumor Association (ABTA) offer the following tips for coping with, managing and getting the most out of the holiday season.

Prepare for the Holidays

- As the holidays approach, ask yourself three questions (the answers may surprise you, and change the way you approach this holiday season):
 - What things in my life bring me a sense of thankfulness and gratitude?
 - What nourishes my spirit?
 - What non-material gifts can I give to others, or to myself?
- Plan ahead. Develop a calendar of specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends, and/or other events. Start long before the holiday actually arrives.
- If you are purchasing gifts, draw up a reasonable budget and stick to it. Double your estimated amount of time needed for holiday shopping and errands.

Rethink Expectations

- Lighten your holiday load by eliminating some items from your to-do list.
- If you are entertaining others, try prepared or partially prepared foods, or ask guests to bring a dish to share.
- Don't worry about cleaning before company arrives. They are coming to see you and your family, not your home.
- Realize that things don't have to be perfect.
- Don't feel guilty if you are not happy. Sadness during the holidays is normal, and usually temporary.
- Allow any improvement from the previous holidays to come as a pleasant surprise.

- As families change and grow, traditions may need to evolve as well. Hold on to the family rituals that bring you the greatest amount of joy, and those that you can comfortably participate in. Understand that some traditions may no longer be possible. It may help to add a new tradition; one that you can truly enjoy.

Take Care of Yourself

- Get enough rest, eat right (avoid too much alcohol and sugar), and continue exercise routines when possible.
- Find a creative outlet: sing a song, have coffee with a friend, read a best-seller, keep a journal – do something special to make you feel refreshed.
- Put your emotional, physical and spiritual needs first, even if it means saying “no” to some obligations and invitations. Attend only those events that will brighten your spirits.
- Before you go to someone’s home or an event, take a nap or make sure you’ve had enough rest. This way you can truly enjoy the company of others.
- Don’t push yourself to be cheerful when you’re not.
- Accept help from others, and articulate to those around you what you need. Ask for their understanding as well.
- Reach out to your faith community. A spiritual advisor or friend who shares your faith can provide strength and comfort during the holidays and throughout the year.

Founded in 1973, the American Brain Tumor Association was the first national nonprofit organization dedicated solely to brain tumors. Today, we are a leader in funding brain tumor research, as well as providing information and support to brain tumor patients, families and caregivers. For more information, visit the ABTA Web site at: www.abta.org, or call 1-800-886-2282.