

DECEMBER 14TH 2020

URSINUS COLLEGE

WEEKLY WELLNESS & COUNSELING NEWSLETTER

VOLUME TWO, ISSUE FIFTEEN



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

THE WINTER BREAK BLUES

RETURNING HOME WHEN HOME IS STRESSFUL

- Communication tips to keep the peace
- Staying connected to outside support systems

GIVING YOURSELF ROOM TO BREATHE

- Be kind to yourself: self-compassion & self-care
- Journaling and making lists

MAKING SPIRITS BRIGHT WHEN YOU CAN'T BE TOGETHER

- Holiday traditions, old and new

EMBRACING THE SEASON

- How to hygge: ways to actually enjoy winter

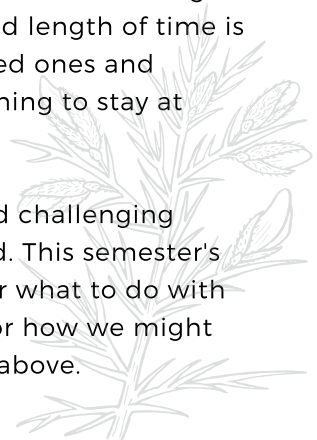
The Winter Break Blues

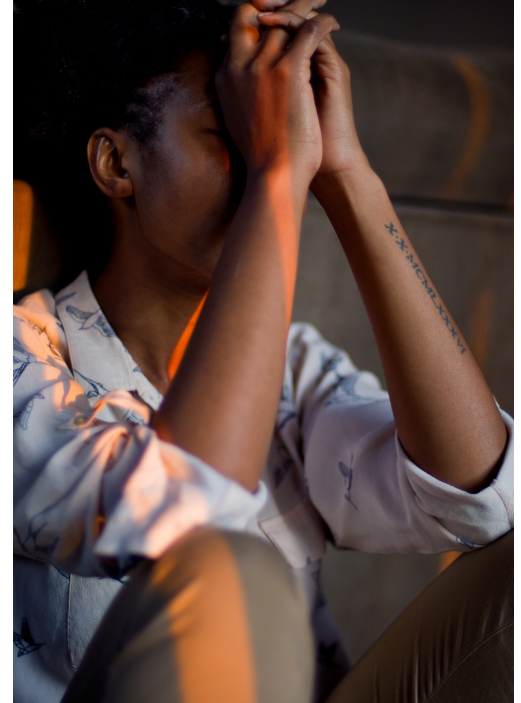
FACING UNIQUE CHALLENGES AT THE END OF AN UNUSUAL SEMESTER

Many folks look forward to the holidays and feel that this is "the most wonderful time of the year". However, even when things are normal, winter break and the holiday season can be a challenging time for many students. For some, social pressure from relatives can make the holidays uncomfortable. Students may find that returning home after several months of being independent can feel restrictive or conflict with parental expectations. Others worry about the financial burden of buying gifts at a time when they are already struggling.

This year, the added stress of the pandemic supplies another layer of tension and uncertainty to winter break. For some, the notion of being cooped up inside with the same people for an extended length of time is daunting. Concern for the health and safety of our loved ones and ourselves may cause anxiety, and the prospect of returning to stay at home orders can be difficult to face.

How ever you may be feeling as this highly unusual and challenging semester winds down, know that your feelings are valid. This semester's final edition of our weekly newsletter contains ideas for what to do with ourselves over the break, as well as coping strategies for how we might handle moments or situations like the ones described above.





Returning home

WHEN HOME IS STRESSFUL

Home can be a comforting and relaxing environment for some and a stressful, difficult place for others. The ongoing pandemic may have changed or intensified the way many people are feeling about being at home. In order to stay safe as COVID-19 cases rise, we may find that we are having to spend more time with the people in our homes than we would otherwise.

Staying connected

TO OUTSIDE SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- Keep in contact with your friends from school so that you remain connected over winter break.
- Turn to online groups, friends, or other outside support systems that feel safe and non-judgmental.
- Look for seasonal employment or volunteer opportunities to keep yourself busy and connect to new groups of people.
- Spend time with people who have a positive influence on you, and if possible, avoid the ones that don't.

Communication tips TO KEEP THE PEACE

- To get ahead of potential tension, communicate openly with parents/family about how each person envisions what winter break will look like.
- Set boundaries and verbalize them to your family if you need some breathing room to adjust to being home again.
- It may be helpful to negotiate new house rules that view returning college students as adults and not kids.
- Know that you are allowed to feel how you feel. Your feelings are important and deserve to be heard. Everyone in your household deserves to be heard, too.
- Remember that conflict in families is normal (especially right now!) and you are not alone.
- [CLICK HERE](#) to review our newsletter about dealing with family conflict, complete with tips on how to plan a productive family meeting.





Giving ourselves

SOME ROOM TO BREATHE

While it is nice to spend quality time with loved ones over the holidays, too much togetherness can begin to feel stifling. Try carving out a space in your home to use as a sanctuary when you're feeling overwhelmed or need a break from the people in your house. This could be your bedroom, a cozy nook, or a small spot in an overlooked or underused part of the home.

Be kind to yourself

SELF COMPASSION & SELF CARE

When difficult emotions rise to the surface, acknowledge them and allow yourself to feel them, rather than ignoring or dismissing your own pain. Treat yourself as you would treat a dear friend who is struggling and needs support. When someone we love is suffering, we often feel a desire to offer comfort, kindness, warmth, and solace. Try turning these feelings inward as a way to take care of yourself.

[CLICK HERE](#) to review our newsletter on self-compassion and [HERE](#) for our newsletter on self-care.

[CLICK HERE](#) to re-read our past newsletter about examining and challenging negative thoughts.

Journaling

AND MAKING LISTS

Some students find it helpful to process events or difficult emotions by journaling about them. Writing down our thoughts as they come can sometimes help us find the clarity we need to make sense of them. If journaling appeals to you but you don't know where to start, try making lists.

- Make a list of things you would like to do over winter break with your free time.
- Make a list of pandemic-friendly activities that you enjoy.
- Write a list of coping skills or responses that help you answer family's questions or address conflicts. Practice them!
- Make lists of life's small moments or experiences that made you feel happy.
- Practice gratitude by writing down one or two things each day that made you feel warm and positive.
- Write down all the things you have loved and enjoyed about this season over the years.
- Make a list of random acts of kindness you could do throughout the course of winter break.



Making spirits bright

WHEN YOU CAN'T BE TOGETHER

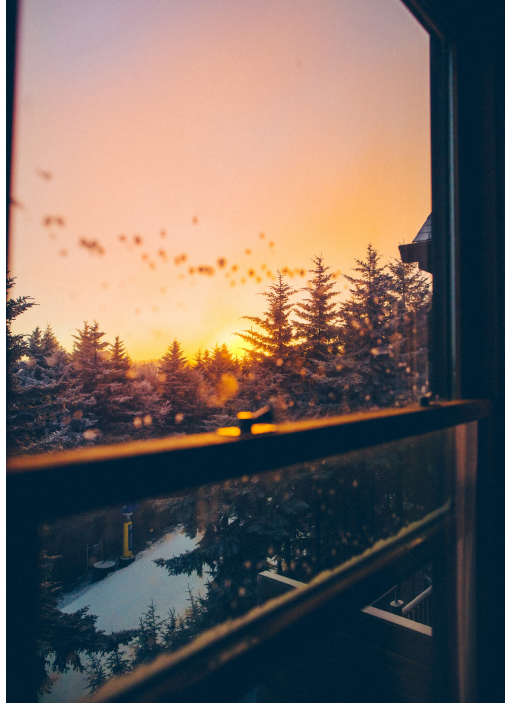
This holiday season is unlike any other we have experienced so far. Many families are finding that they will be unable to gather and celebrate in their usual way. It is normal to feel sadness, grief, or disappointment that some cherished holiday traditions will not happen, whether it be due to Covid-19, loss, distance, or some other reason. Some people may be feeling relief at not having to participate in traditions that no longer feel comfortable, and that is normal, too. We can use this time to savor old traditions that still feel meaningful and right, reflect on past holiday rituals and think about what we may not want to carry forward, and embrace the opportunity to try something new.

Holiday traditions, OLD AND NEW

Feeling stuck and bummed out at the prospect of having a physically distant holiday this year? Here are some fun ideas to try.

- Put a new twist on the "ugly holiday sweater party" and host an ugly holiday mask party on Zoom! Send a prize to the creator of the most heinous mask.

- Schedule a virtual holiday get together with loved ones. Ask everyone to come prepared to share a holiday memory, tell a famous family story, or recall some of the fun family antics from holidays gone by.
- Put together small winter themed care packages and deliver them anonymously on the doorsteps of nearby friends and family, Secret Santa style.
- Make a list of family fun facts and brainstorm with relatives to come up with trivia questions unique to your family. (What was the secret ingredient in Nana's pumpkin pie? Which cousin famously broke this holiday heirloom and tried to hide it? What holiday decoration was stolen from our yard in 2004?) Send out Zoom invitations and host a family game show!
- Readapt an old tradition to be virtual or socially distanced. Get creative!
- Challenge the people in your household to make an ornament out of random items from around the house in 30 minutes. Post photos of the ornaments on social media and let the masses decide the winner.



Embracing the season

FINDING WAYS TO CELEBRATE WINTER

When you think of winter, what words come to mind? If several months of shortened days, frigid temperatures, ice, slush, and darkness have you feeling blue, you're not alone! Some people report feeling down in a pattern that correlates with the season. The added prospect of facing winter during a pandemic can be especially challenging to confront. Here are some ways to embrace the season, boost your mood, and keep yourself healthy.

How to hygge:

WAYS TO ACTUALLY ENJOY WINTER

Hygge is the Danish concept of embracing warmth and comfortable coziness as a part of our overall happiness and well-being. This mindset is especially helpful during the winter months when coziness feels like a natural remedy for darkness and cold temperatures.

- Nourish your body with seasonal produce. Embracing what the winter garden has to offer tastes better, costs less, and is good for the environment as well.
- Delight your inner child and go sledding or ice skating.

- What comes to your mind when you think of warmth? Fuzzy socks? A crackling fire in the fireplace (or a yule log burning on the TV screen)? A mug of hot cocoa? A sleeping cat purring on your lap? Make a list of these things and surround yourself with them all winter long.
- Warm and fuzzy feelings are hygge, too! Find ways to show people you love them and strengthen your friendships.
- Treat the extra hours of darkness as a gift from mother nature by using this time to get into a healthy sleep routine, [**CLICK HERE**](#) to review our sleep hygiene tips.
- Disconnect from the internet and devote time to hobbies like crafting or baking.
- Bundle up and head outside. Your body and mind will benefit from the exercise, fresh air, and vitamin D. Try a hike through the woods if you have access to nature or walk around your neighborhood at night to enjoy the lights. A socially distanced outdoor bonfire would be nice as well!
- Create a cozy, intimate environment with candles, curl up with a good book, or snuggle on the couch and watch a movie.