



COUNSELING SERVICES



UHCL Counseling Services 2021 Holiday Mental Health Care Package:

We realize the impacts of COVID-19 and other current events continue to affect UHCL Students, Faculty, Staff and Community in countless ways. The holidays can already be a stressful and overwhelming time, and due to the global pandemic and other emotional stressors, this holiday season may be another challenging one. All of us will be balancing the dilemma of how to connect and celebrate while also trying to act responsibly, stay safe, and take care of ourselves. Counseling Services is committed to providing services in the best interest of your emotional and mental health needs, as well as your continued personal growth. For information on any of our services, and how to access them, please visit our [website](#).

UHCL Counseling Services has decided to reach out to you this holiday season in a virtual way! Please accept this Virtual Care Package carefully compiled by the UHCL Counseling Services team especially for you. We hope that you will take full advantage of these resources. We wish you all a happy and safe holiday.

What are the Holiday Blues?

How can you cope with the Holiday Blues?

The holidays are meant to be a joyful time of good cheer and optimistic hopes. Yet it is not unusual for many of us to feel sad or lonely. You may feel angry, have difficulty concentrating, or have trouble sleeping. You may notice a decreased interest in activities that usually bring you pleasure. Some of us will face social isolation, grief, and even some seasonal depression. This condition of feeling sad and stressed at the holidays is called the [holiday blues](#) or holiday depression. Continued [global pandemic concerns](#) overwhelm us and make us feel even more isolated. We will all be making some [tough decisions](#) regarding how to [do what is best](#) for our safety and the safety of our loved ones. UHCL Counseling Services wants you to know that it is [okay to not be okay](#) this holiday season.

Numerous things [cause the holiday blues](#). The blues can be brought on by exhaustion, financial difficulties, and unrealistic expectations. Sometimes the strain of dealing with your family, or conversely, the loneliness of not being with your loved ones, can cause the blues. Over committing and over commercialization can also cause you to feel stressed and sad. Breaking healthy habits is another possible [trigger](#) for the holiday blues. Additionally some of us may feel [out of practice socially](#).

There are many ways to [manage these feelings](#) and [ease the holiday blues](#), as well as beating [post holiday blues](#). One good way to handle holiday stress is to [practice mindfulness](#). Mindfulness is the practice of focusing on and appreciating the present moment. When you get into the habit of practicing mindfulness it can help reduce stress and anxiety overall.

It can be also be helpful to sit down and write down a [holiday plan](#). Set realistic goals and prioritize your activities. Remember to not take on more than you can handle. Work on [coping strategies](#) like finding new ways to connect or helping others. Kids are likely to be especially disappointed this year. You can help them cope with this unusual holiday season by having a plan already in place to help your child handle [holiday disappointment](#).



Creative Ways to Celebrate the 2021 Holidays

Whether you are choosing to celebrate the holidays with gatherings of loved ones or cozied up at home, there are options! COVID-19 and the global health have changed our everyday lives and relationships. If you choose to gather together with others at the holidays, be open in your communication with family members and do not be afraid [to set healthy boundaries](#) with those you love.

There are [wonderful ways](#) to celebrate the holidays right from home. If you're craving a holiday adventure outside of the home the [Houston Zoo Lights](#) offers a safe, outdoor option to experience the joys of the holiday. Space Center Houston also offers [Galaxy Lights](#). Or you can simply make some delicious [holiday treats](#) with the family.

While your holiday celebrations may look different than normal, there are still ways to have a healthy holiday season while enjoying [new holiday traditions](#). We are certain that with a little bit of thought and planning your holiday season can be as celebratory as any other.

Obviously, the holidays are often jam-packed full of fun celebrations and events. Use your creativity to host a [holiday party](#) for any phase of the pandemic whether virtually or in person. [Virtual holiday parties](#) offer new opportunities to make fun holiday memories and there are countless virtual party [theme and game ideas](#) to make this year's holiday party more memorable than ever.

For professional relationships, there are ways to celebrate the holidays with your colleagues and fellow employees at your work! There are so many [ways to celebrate](#) the [holidays with your team](#) and still [feel connected](#) regardless of being in office or working remotely.

Do you usually travel over the holidays? Have you decided you must forgo your annual holiday trip due to health or safety concerns? You can still give in to wanderlust without worrying about your budget or safety. Simply choose one of many [virtual travel experiences](#) available.

If you want to truly experience the holiday spirit, remember to give back. The holidays have always been an important time to help others in need. Our friends and neighbors need help now more than ever before, and there are plenty of COVID-friendly ways to [give back](#) to our communities either remotely or safely in person.

Showing Gratitude

It can help our holiday spirit tremendously if we try to stay positive. “Trying to see the bright side of difficult circumstances is beneficial for your mental and [physical health](#),” says Julie Arnold, LMSW, Holland Hospital Behavioral Health Services. “Tapping into positive thinking can help you problem solve and be more creative, strengthen your immune system and build resilience.”

One of the best ways to be and stay optimistic is by [practicing gratitude](#). What is gratitude exactly? Gratitude is the practice of noticing and being thankful for what is valuable and meaningful to you. When you stop to smell the roses, find the silver lining, or count your blessings you are practicing gratitude.

So why is [practicing gratitude important](#) right now? Because being grateful can enhance your quality of life and be good for your overall health. Alternative medicine expert Deepak Chopra is a proponent of using gratitude as a [simple way](#) any of us can counteract stress and stay healthy during the pandemic. Being grateful may help you feel [calm](#) and resilient during these trying times. Gratitude allows you to reframe and experience things in a more positive way. In other words, gratitude promotes a [positive outlook](#).

Practicing gratitude can be quite easy. Just set a goal to be grateful for a specific number of things by a certain time each day. If you can't think of anything or are finding it hard to get started that is okay. You can always refer to a list of [gratitude prompts](#) or practice gratitude using specific [gratitude exercises](#). One of the most powerful ways to be grateful is to express our gratitude with others but also remember to be gentle and practice [gratitude for yourself](#) during this highly unusual and stressful time.



Celebrating Loss

Holidays can often bring about difficulty in remembering those we have lost. COVID-19 has not only impacted how we celebrate the holiday season, but also [how we grieve](#) those we have lost and [what we have lost](#). Historically, we have been able to memorialize the death of our loved ones in ways that reflect and honor our [cultural traditions](#). This pandemic has impacted us to the point that those practices and rituals have shifted. While we may be able to logically understand the contributing factors to these changes, it does not diminish the emotional toll this has had on us, especially during the holiday season. As a result, you may be experiencing holiday blues, but even more so, you are experiencing the [stages of grief](#) including denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance along with an array of complex [loss](#).

We want to validate and normalize these feelings for you. You are not alone!

All of us have had some sort of loss brought on by the pandemic. We all have reasons to grieve. It is important to learn how collective grief is impacting us and what we can do to help ourselves and others. It is also important to note that grief can impact us [biologically](#).

There are plenty of ways to [support others through their grief](#) and general ways of [healing](#). Some cultures have creative ways of [coping with grief on your own](#) if you are not ready to invite others to observe with you. Diversity is also important to consider in our understanding of how we grieve. Check out these resources that reflect various aspects of multiculturalism including race, ethnicity, culture and religion in different groups such as: [Black/African American](#), [Japanese](#), a tribe in [West Africa](#), [Islamic faith](#), [Hinduism](#), [Irish](#), [Chinese](#), and through music in a traditional [New Orleans](#) celebration of life.



We recognize that grief is not one-size fits all, and that individuals may resonate with different ways of celebrating loss including:

Podcasts and TED Talks:

[What's Your Grief Podcast: Grief Support for Those Who Like to Listen](#) – “One digestible topic at a time, Haley and Williams distill topics ranging from grief theory to coping.”

[We don't “move on” from grief. We move forward with it-](#) Nora McInerny explores a unique way to conceptualize our experiences of grief through her TED Talk.

[Grief Cast-](#) A discussion of grief from a comedic lens.

[Grief Out Loud-](#) “We bring you a mix of personal stories, tips for supporting children, teens, and yourself, and interviews with bereavement professionals.”

[The Mary Mac Show-](#) “The Mary Mac Show, lends her over 35 years' experience to comfort and educate those grieving the death of a loved one.”

Documentaries:

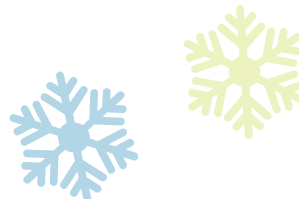
“How does one prepare for death? How does one prepare for what happens after a loved one has died? What happens when you are alone?” With over [13 titles](#), you are bound to find at least one documentary that touches your heart in some meaningful way.

Movies:

[Eight movies that perfectly portray grief of losing a loved one](#) including famous titles such as Pixar's “UP”, “Harry Potter”, “P.S. I Love You”, “[CoCo](#)” and “We Bought a Zoo”.

Literature:

[24 Best Books About Coping with Grief & Pain from Loss](#) include authors who explore the death of a parent, child, friend, and other loved ones.



Any individual requiring an accommodation in order to participate in these services will need to contact Counseling Services at 281.283.2580 prior to participating