Survival Tips for the Holiday Season

1. **Plan ahead.** Shop early for gifts and prepare in advance for gatherings. This way, you'll miss the holiday rush. If you're traveling, expect delays.

2. **Stick to a budget.** Decide how much money you're going to spend before you go shopping and stick to your limits. If you spend too much, it's likely that you'll feel anxious and tense for months trying to pay those bills.

3. **Clarify your expectations.** While you're planning ahead, think about where you want to spend your time and energy during the holiday season. Whether you prefer to spend time with family, friends, or have some time to yourself, think of ways you can best get your needs met.

4. **Learn to say "no."** If there is something you don't want to do over the holidays, don't do it. It's okay to tell people "no." It's normal to feel some guilt about saying "no," but if you say "yes" to something you don't want to do, you may end up feeling resentful and more stressed out.

5. **Acknowledge your feelings.** If you've lost someone close to you, it's perfectly normal for you to get sad over the holidays. Take some time out for yourself to cry or express your feelings. You don't have to force yourself to be happy just because it's the holidays.

6. **Coping with family.** Family conflicts are usually heightened during the holiday season. Prepare yourself for the return of old issues. Think about the ways you interact with members of your family and the ways they respond to you. If there is something you don't like about the pattern, think ahead of time about some things you can do to avoid it.

7. **Don't overdo it.** Food and alcohol are ever-present during the holiday season. While it's okay to do some indulging, overdoing it will make you feel guilty and add to your stress level. Try to have a healthy snack before going to a gathering to avoid overeating. If you drink, be sure you have a designated driver. Make sure you get enough sleep and some physical activity over the holidays.

8. **Take care of yourself.** Schedule some time for yourself to do the things that make you feel happy and relaxed. Meditate, read, take a walk, or do anything else that helps you cope with stress. Try to find some time alone, even if just for 10 minutes, away from distractions to help you feel focused and refreshed.

9. **Seek support.** If you're feeling down or stressed out, find someone you trust to talk to about it. Keep in contact with your friends or go to a family member you feel close to. If you know ahead of time that the holidays will be especially stressful and you want help preparing for them, seek out the help of a counselor at the Student Counseling Center.