



Traveling Home for the Holidays: Tips for College Students

Winter break is usually the first extended period of time since the beginning of the semester that college students say “goodbye” to their dorm/college life. Although some students may be looking forward to this, some may have some reservations about traveling home for the prolonged winter break. The holiday season is typically a time of many magical and joyful experiences; however, it can also cause feelings of stress & anxiety. The following tips may be helpful for college students & their families as they prepare for the winter break.

- ♦ **Quality time-** students & parents may have different expectations on how the holidays will look when their child is home for winter break. Parents often envision their child spending significant amounts of time with family and at home, however, students may have plans to get a job to make extra money or visit old friends from their hometown. It is important to ***communicate in advance*** with your parents to discuss expectations and come to an agreement of the amount of quality time spent with family.
- ♦ **Independence-** a common area of conflict between students and parents is the idea of independence. Parents often have difficulty seeing their child as an adult who has been living on their own for the past semester. For students, it may be difficult to transition back to their parents “house rules” after enjoying the freedom they have been given. ***Communication is key.*** It may be helpful for students & parents to negotiate a new set of house rules upon the student’s arrival home for winter break.
- ♦ **Mental health-** some students may experience anxiety and/or depression while home for winter break due to being away from their college environment. The same may be present as students return back to college after the holiday break comes to an end. Be sure to use coping skills and reach out to your support system as well as mental health resources such as your college/campus counseling center.
- ♦ **Self-Care-** stress, anxiety, depression and sleep difficulties are a few of the top factors that affect college student’s academic performance. As the semester comes to an end, it is important for students to take care of themselves and find ways to relax over winter break in order to “recharge” for the upcoming semester. Examples of self-care include:
 - Taking care of your body (hygiene, healthy sleep habits, regular meals, etc.)
 - Surround yourself with a strong support system
 - Allow yourself to spend time on a new hobby or other activity you don’t often get the time to engage in throughout the semester

- Practice relaxation techniques (meditation, journaling, deep breathing)
- “Unplug” from technology
- Exercise & stay physically active

If you are struggling with overwhelming stress and/or anxiety about traveling home for the holidays, seek help from your campus counseling center or you can reach out to us at the number/email below. In addition, speaking with friends, family & loved ones who you trust and consider your support system may be helpful. The Behavioral Wellness Group offers an intensive outpatient program (IOP) designed specifically for college students. The College Mental Wellness IOP is designed for individuals ages 18-25 who are enrolled in higher education or currently taking “time off/gap” due to their mental health. The IOP provides many coping skills and is tailored to college students struggling with mental health and college stressors that may be impacting their everyday lives. Happy Holidays to you from us at BWG!

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