

# Holiday Planning

Name:

How I'm feeling about the holidays including things that are worrying me:

Who knows what's going on with me and who can I talk to?

Where else can I turn for support?

How will I make sure I get up, get dressed and get out regularly?

What are my healthy coping strategies?

## **Accompanying Notes for Supporting Adult**

*Whilst many of us look forward to the school holidays, for young people with mental health or emotional wellbeing issues they can be a difficult time. For many young people school provides the routine and motivation to get up that they need to keep depression at bay, and the support they need to keep their emotional wellbeing in check. So it's important that you prepare students you're working with for the weeks ahead. Here are a few things you could discuss with them.*

### **How are they feeling about the holidays?**

Discuss with the young person how they are feeling about the upcoming holidays and whether there is anything specific that is giving them cause for concern. In addition to the fact that they may not have access to their usual support network and the structure and stability of school, they may have specific concerns about:

- Travelling
- Spending time with specific people
- Responsibilities at home
- School work for completion over the holidays

Have an open discussion with them and generate a list of issues they are concerned about and be sure that you address each of these in turn. Gaining an understanding of why each item on the list is causing the student anxiety as well as thinking of possible ways around it. Try to encourage them to think up their own solutions where possible rather than just feeding them the answers as this will better prepare them for facing any unexpected difficulties they may face over the holiday period.

### **Who is currently aware of their difficulties?**

Talk with the student about who, beyond school, is currently aware of what they're going through and what support they've been receiving. Depending on who knows what, it might be appropriate to discuss with the student how you might work with them to increase the number of people who have enough information to be able to provide effective support.

### **Who can they turn to for help at home?**

Who knows, and who can help are sometimes two different things. Out of the people who are aware of what's going on with the student, discuss with them who they might turn to if things get difficult or they need someone to talk to.

## **Accompanying Notes for Supporting Adult**

### **What other sources of support are there?**

Identify further sources of support with the student. This is likely to include helplines and websites such as Childline and the Samaritans. Try to identify at least one source of support that is available 24/7 – the Samaritans are especially good in this regard; they even listen on Christmas day (which is good news as it can be an especially difficult day for people with mental health and emotional wellbeing difficulties).

### **What will their typical day look like – how will they ensure structure and routine?**

Think with the student about how they are going to spend their time over the holiday. The structure and routine of school can help to stave off depression and anxiety which often lays almost dormant until the holidays arrive, bringing with them a lack of structure and no reason to get up, get dressed or get out. Think about simple aims that you might agree with the student such as ‘I will leave the house for at least twenty minutes each day. If I have no other reason, I will walk to the corner shop and back again.’ Think about how they might add routine to an otherwise unstructured day. This might include taking on household chores like emptying the dishwasher, preparing meals, walking the dog or watering the garden. Alternatively they might agree a schedule to regularly meet friends or choose to take up a holiday job or voluntary position which provides them with motivation and structure.

### **What healthy coping mechanisms can they turn to?**

Finally, consider with the student what healthy coping mechanisms they might use if they aren't managing. Rather than turning to unhealthy coping like self-harm, bingeing or abusing alcohol, think with them about how they might work through their feelings in another way, such as by painting, writing or playing sport.