**Supporting Someone with Mental Illness During the Holidays**

* Understand that a change in routine can cause stress
* Ask the person what you can do to support them. Listen to what the person needs/wants and respect it.
* Respect their healthy coping mechanisms
  + Respect their need for routine
  + Respect that they don’t drink
  + Respect their need for space or quiet time
  + Respect that they need to eat, sleep, exercise on schedule
  + Respect that leaving early or not attending is OK
* Find a signal they can use to show they need a break
* Talk with other family members ahead of time
* Create a less stressful environment
  + Smaller get-together, more simple/informal
* Focus on things that don’t require money
  + Singing carols, playing games, looking at lights, volunteering, making a snowman
* Go with the flow and be flexible – don’t expect perfection, be OK with “good enough”
* Consider celebrating the holidays in a new way
* If you are attending a religious service, consider one with a smaller attendance
* Be mindful that outbursts are due to illness symptoms & stress – don’t take it personally
* If person is in hospital, group home or other care facility:
  + Ask if day pass can be granted
  + Find out what you can bring to them – food, presents, etc.
  + Assure them celebration can be earlier or later; the main thing is to be there for them and let them know you care about them!
* Focus on love for the person!

*National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Grand Rapids Area)*

[*www.namigrandrapidsmn.org*](http://www.namigrandrapidsmn.org)