

Our favorite reads for rest, relaxation, and a little joy

by Mental Health America staff



The holiday season can be a time of joy, connection, and reflection — but it can also bring stress, fatigue, and emotional overwhelm. Taking time to unwind with a good book can be a great way to relax, recharge, and nurture mental well-being. This book recommendation list compiled by Mental Health America staff offers a selection of books to help ease stress and spark joy during the holidays and beyond.

Book recommendations:

1. “The House in the Cerulean Sea” by TJ Klune

“If you're looking for magic, whimsy, travel, and love, this cozy fantasy may be right up your alley.”

–Kristen

2. “Before the Coffee Gets Cold” by Toshikazu Kawaguchi

“The kind of story you'll curl up with on the couch, that brings up feelings of nostalgia and comfort.”

–Jennifer

3. “The Spellshop” by Sarah Beth Durst

“Who doesn't love a talking plant? This fantasy is about finding friendship in the unlikeliest of places.”

–Kristen

4. “What You Are Looking For Is in the Library” by Michiko Aoyama

“Whether they're looking for a new career or learning how to cook, these characters find all that and more in their local library.” –Kristen

5. “Upstream” by Mary Oliver

“A book of meditations on nature and its beauty to soothe in trying times.” –Kristen

6. “A Sorceress Comes to Call” by Ursula Vernon

“A fantasy book that has you thinking about finding your voice and a chosen family.” –Theresa

7. “The Guncle” by Steven Rowley

“I dare you not to laugh while reading this charming book about a gay man who takes in his niece and nephew for the summer and learns to let people into his life again.” –Kristen

8. “The Antidote” by Karen Russell

“This book explores American history during the Dust Bowl, where the consequences of forgotten memories push us to consider what we lose and can gain by being brave.” –Theresa

9. “The Rosie Project” by Graeme Simsion

“A lighthearted romantic comedy that celebrates individuality and the unexpected paths to happiness.” –Jennifer

10. “Remarkably Bright Creatures” by Shelby Van Pelt

“If you've ever wondered what the world might look like through the eyes of an octopus, this enchanting read is for you.” –Kristen

Tips for a calmer reading experience

- Create a cozy reading nook with soft lighting and a warm blanket.
- Set aside 15–30 minutes each day for uninterrupted reading.
- Pair reading time with a soothing drink like tea or hot chocolate.
- Choose books that match your current mood – comforting, inspiring, or purely entertaining.

About Mental Health America

Mental Health America (MHA) is the nation's leading nonprofit dedicated to the promotion of mental health, well-being, and prevention. This holiday season, MHA encourages everyone to take time for self-care, connection, and joy.

For more mental health resources, visit mhanational.org

To donate to our year-end efforts, visit mhanational.org/hope



Wishing you peace, rest, and joy this holiday season.

– *The Mental Health America team*