

Helpful Hints for avoiding Holiday Depression

It is no secret the holidays can be difficult. This time can be filled with parties, celebrations, and social gatherings with family and friends, but at the same time, it can be filled with sadness, self-reflection, loneliness and anxiety.

The loss or absence of family and friends can create an increased sense of loneliness during the holidays. The recently bereaved are experiencing all their “firsts” without their loved one, and it seems Thanksgiving through New Year’s are especially low points.

As early as late summer, retailers begin promoting the holiday season, and the burden of budgets, lists, a jammed calendar, decorating, cooking, buying and wrapping is on the mind. Anxiety and stress builds and weighs us down. We get easily overwhelmed. The stress of the holidays may cause people who do not view themselves as “depressed” to develop stress responses, such as headaches, excessive drinking, overeating and insomnia. Even die-hard holiday enthusiasts may find that the extra shopping and socializing can leave them wiped out. Being exhausted increases your stress and makes you more susceptible to colds.

Overcommercialization and financial stress can peak right before the holidays and then show up again in January when the bills come in. Then again, some experience post-holiday sadness after New Year’s/January 1st, resulting from unmet expectations and disappointments from the previous year, coupled with stress and fatigue.

Shortened winter days can also cause some change in behavior. Most people find they eat and sleep slightly more in wintertime and dislike the dark mornings and short days, which can be a trigger for a depressed mood. Relationships can also cause turmoil, conflict or stress at any time, but tensions are often heightened during the holidays. Family misunderstandings and conflicts can intensify – especially if you’re put together for several days.

Although there may be no statistical increase in depressive or suicidal thoughts during the holidays, most experts agree that this time of year, above all others, has the right mix of variables that contribute to feeling overwhelmed.

The holidays weren’t designed to create lasting happiness but are just a brief moment in time to celebrate, in your family’s tradition, what is important to you. There are a variety of ways to approach November and December effectively.

To create a lasting feeling of happiness, tap into your sense of purpose and meaning in life. These are more significant factors to happiness than the pursuit of pleasure. If you are involved in community or spiritual activities, you are more likely to have a greater satisfaction with life.

A little depression or sadness during or after the holidays is normal...even the happiest of people have bad days. However, do not neglect yourself if your episodes become more frequent, more intense and more prolonged...contact your doctor or a counselor.

The holidays can be especially difficult. Don't suffer. Call us for help.

10 WAYS TO PREVENT “THE BLUES”

1. Learn to say no. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can’t participate in every project or activity. If it’s not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for lost time.
2. List all the things that need to be done, and if possible, delegate! If not possible, cut back. Prioritize important activities, then add them to your schedule... but spread them out over time to lessen the burden. Do not take on more than you can handle.
3. Try something new—celebrate the holidays in a new way. This especially applies to people who are grieving. Sometimes keeping everything the way it has been just magnifies the hole that is present without your loved one. In addition, it is normal to feel sadness and grief and express those feelings.
4. Keep up with holiday spending and make a plan to pay off those bills. Plan to put aside a little money to pay for next year.
5. Try to live in the moment and enjoy the present. Don’t be chained with someone’s unrealistic expectations (or your own). Be liberated by enjoying the now.
6. Limit your consumption of alcohol, since excessive drinking will only increase your feelings of depression. Don’t overeat. Overindulgence only adds to stress and guilt.
7. Surround yourself with supportive and caring people. Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don’t live up to all your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion.
8. Reach out to others. If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social entities. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.
9. Look at the blank calendar for the New Year – this is a clean slate. How to make the best of it is up to you. Take some time to think of your direction this year.
10. Get out. Just because the weather is cold and dreary doesn’t mean you were made to hibernate. Bundle up and get outside, even if it is just for a short time.



MERRY CHRISTMAS

I CAN'T AFFORD THAT

Is There a Way Out?

HAPPY HANUKKAH

NOT ANOTHER PARTY

MISS MY FAMILY

Happy Holidays

I NEED A BREAK

FELIZ NAVIDAD

I'm Desperate

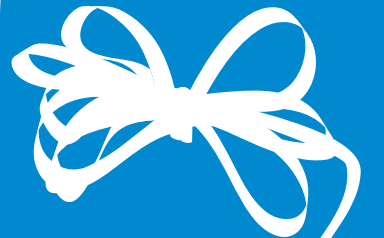
BAH HUMBUG

I FEEL SO ALONE

I NEED A DRINK

I CAN'T FIND A JOB

I Feel Trapped



Hope

for the

Holidays

Every year, over 21 million adult Americans suffer from a depressive illness. It's more than just being sad or feeling down after a bad day. It is a complex state of mind that is felt all the time. It affects not only the individual but also those around them. It creates other medical disorders and can lead to thoughts of death and suicide. The holidays can be especially difficult. Don't Suffer. Call us for help. Our trained staff of professionals is available 24/7/365.

The sooner you call Lakeside,
the better it will be for everybody.

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