

The Holiday Blues

'Tis the season to be jolly or is it? For many of us, the holidays mean a time of happiness, celebration, and optimism. The holidays, however, are often a time when millions of people experience seasonal depression and stress.

Depression is common this time of year for many different reasons. For many, the pain over the loss of a loved one intensifies during the holidays. We are reminded that our loved ones are no longer here to share the holidays with us. Not only do we feel the loss when a loved one has passed away, we may experience other kinds of losses this time of year as well. The holidays can make it more difficult to deal with the end of a relationship or the termination of a job. The holidays are a time when many people get nostalgic and long for things to be like they were in the past. It is a time to reflect on our lives and our future and for some this can cause feelings of sadness, disappointment and regret.

People often overextend themselves during the holidays. You may spend more money than you can afford or commit to more holiday activities than time permits. Physical factors can increase our stress level as well, such as lack of sleep, overeating, and excessive drinking. Family reunions can add tension to the holidays as can hosting parties or having houseguests. It can simply be difficult to try to put on a happy face if you are feeling blue.

Some may experience a post holiday let down after the New Year. You may suffer from emotional disappointments if holiday celebrations or family reunions fail to live up to your expectations. The holidays often leave us feeling fatigued. The reality of financial obligations may suddenly be upon you after the holidays as bills begin to pour in.

Tips to help minimize holiday blues:

1. Don't commit to more than you can handle. This applies not only to celebrations, events and other activities, but also holds true for your finances. Determine a budget for holiday spending and do your best to stay within that budget.
2. Acknowledge feelings of grief and loss if they exist. Just because the holidays are here, does not mean you always have to put on a happy face. Allow yourself to express your emotions.
3. Don't remain stuck in the past. Try to avoid wishing for the good old times and instead focus on creating a positive future and new memories.
4. Avoid unrealistic expectations. Don't plan for this to be "the best holiday season ever". If you set your expectations too high, you are likely to be disappointed.
5. Do something for someone else. Volunteer or help someone in need. It can help put things into perspective and simply put, it makes you feel good.
6. Spend time with those who are supportive of you and increase your self-esteem.

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