

How to Beat the Holiday Blues

The holiday season is fast approaching. It is a time full of joy, cheer, parties, and family gatherings. However, for many people, it is a time of self-evaluation, loneliness, reflection on the past failures, and anxiety about an uncertain future.

Many factors can cause the “holiday blues”: stress, fatigue, unrealistic expectations, over-commercialization, financial constraints, and the inability to be with one’s family and friends. The demands of shopping, parties, family reunions, and house guests also contribute to feelings of tension. People who do not become depressed may develop other stress responses, such as: headaches, excessive drinking, over-eating, and difficulty sleeping.

Tips for Coping with Stress and Depression During the Holidays:

- **Keep expectations for the holiday season manageable.**
 - Try to set realistic goals of what you can and cannot do. Pace yourself. Organize your time.
- **Remember the holiday season does not do away with reasons for feeling sad or lonely.**
- **Leave “yesteryear” in the past and look toward the future.**
 - Don’t set yourself up in comparing today with the “good ol’ days.”
- **Do something for someone else.**
 - Try volunteering some time to help others.
- **Enjoy activities that are free.**
 - Drive around to see holiday decorations. Spend time outside.
- **Be aware that excessive drinking will only increase your feelings of depression.**
- **Try something new.**
 - Begin a new holiday tradition.
- **Spend time with supportive and caring people.**
 - Contact someone you haven’t heard from for awhile.
- **Save time for yourself!**
 - Recharge your batteries! Let others share responsibility of activities.

(Adapted from National Mental Health Association)