

## Holiday Blues

### Understanding Holiday Blues

The festive season is often associated with joy, warmth, family time, and celebration. However, many people experience **negative unhealthy emotions, anxiety, depression, guilt, anger, hurt, and dysfunctional behavior** during this period. This emotional dip—often called *Holiday Blues*—contrasts with the expected “holiday spirit” and can arise before, during and after the holidays when returning to routine.

### Common Triggers

- **Multiple obligations:** decorating, preparing meals, shopping, social gatherings, work demands.
- **Time pressure** to manage many duties.
- **Loneliness** or lack of family/friends nearby.
- **Unrealistic expectations** about the “perfect” holiday experience.
- **Financial strain** or unresolved personal issues.
- **Year-end reflection** on unfulfilled goals, losses, or challenges.
- **Memories of past holidays**, especially idealized childhood celebrations.

### Signs of Holiday Blues

- Headaches or other physical discomfort
- Sleep difficulties
- Overeating or excessive substance consumption
- Increased anxiety and fatigue (each worsening the other)

### Helpful Tips for Coping

#### 1. Adjust Expectations

- Keep expectations realistic—holidays do not fix long-standing issues.
- Avoid comparing your celebrations or home to idealized media or store displays.
- Creativity matters more than perfection.

#### 2. Set Realistic Goals

- Prioritize what truly matters to you and your family.
- Protect your time—balance caring for others with caring for yourself.
- Ask for help and be specific about what you need.

#### 3. Learn to Say No

- Choose gatherings that feel meaningful.
- You're not required to accept every invitation.
- Reducing overload helps conserve emotional and physical energy.

#### **4. Pace Yourself**

- Holidays last for weeks—enjoy them gradually.
- Avoid excess in food, alcohol, or social commitments.
- Make a simple plan for events and responsibilities.

#### **5. Avoid Financial Overload**

- Create a budget before shopping.
- Gifts don't have to be expensive—many appreciate thoughtfulness or handmade items.
- Quality time is more valuable than the cost of a present.

#### **6. Connect With Supportive People**

- Spend time with those who genuinely care for you.
- Accept that relationships change over time.
- Focus on what you can control—don't expect holiday spirit to fix long-term conflicts.

#### **7. Handling Loneliness**

- If you weren't invited somewhere, invite someone yourself.
- Reconnect with old friends or relatives.
- Volunteering—giving back can reduce isolation and build community.

#### **8. Managing Recent Loss**

- Allow yourself to feel sadness.
- Avoid the pressure of "I must have fun." or "I must feel happy all the time."
- Honor loved ones by visiting meaningful places or doing activities they enjoyed.

#### **9. Create New Traditions**

- Changes in finances or family structure may require new routines.
- Focus on meaningful time together rather than repeating old patterns out of habit.