

COPING WITH THE HOLIDAY “BLUES”

The holiday season 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 past failures, and anxiety about an uncertain future.

Many factors can cause the “holiday blues”: stress, fatigue, unrealistic expectations, 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 sometimes feel depressed or may develop other stress responses, such as: headaches, excessive drinking, overeating, and difficulty sleeping. Even more people experience post-holiday let down after January 1. This can result from disappointments during the preceding months compounded with the excess fatigue and stress.

COPING TIPS

- Keep expectations for the holiday season manageable. Try to set realistic goals for yourself. Pace yourself. Organize your time. Make a list and prioritize the important activities. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. Do not put your entire focus on just one day or event. Winter is a season full of holiday sentiment and you can spread activities throughout the season to lessen stress and increase enjoyment.
- Leave “yesteryear” in the past and look toward the future. Life brings changes. Each season is different and can be enjoyed in its own way. Don’t set yourself up by comparing today with the “good ol’ days.”
- Allow room for feelings of sadness or loneliness. It may not be an entirely joyous season for you or someone you are close to. Allow yourself and

your loved ones to express all feelings.

- Do something for someone else. Try volunteering some time to help others.
- Enjoy activities that are free, such as looking at holiday decorations, going window shopping without buying, going for a walk, or playing in the snow.
- Be aware that excessive drinking will only increase your feelings of depression.
- Break tradition. Celebrate the holidays in a new way.
- Spend time with supportive and caring people. Reach out and make new friends or contact someone you have not heard from for awhile.
- Save time for yourself! Recharge your batteries! Let others share the responsibility for activities.

Reprinted with permission of the National Mental Health Association, www.nmha.org.