

Holiday *Blues*

If you feel more depressed than normal for an extended period following the holidays, do not be afraid to seek help from your GuidanceResources program. **Try reaching out to loved ones and friends for support, and learn ways to cope with the feelings you are experiencing.**

For many people, feeling a little down after the holidays is normal. Once all the decorating, gift-giving, family gatherings and merrymaking are over, a letdown may occur. For kids, this time means returning to school after the holiday break. For adults, it can mean struggling through the darker, colder winter months and paying off holiday bills.

Why We May Feel Depressed After the Holidays

If you feel down once the holidays have come and gone, you are not alone. Many mental and physiological factors may be causing the bouts of stress and winter depression, including:



- **Unrealized expectations.** Pressure to buy the perfect gifts, to expect the perfect gifts, to keep family and friends entertained, and to get in the spirit of the season. You may also feel pressure to make New Year's resolutions that can be difficult to keep.
- **Negative associations with the holidays.** The holidays can be an emotional reminder of loss. Perhaps you dread spending time with certain relatives. These negative feelings often can last beyond the holidays.
- **Anticlimactic feelings.** Once all the festivities have ended, the presents have been exchanged and your holiday time off has passed, it is easy to feel a bit melancholy.
- **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).** Research indicates that people with SAD often experience a range of symptoms that may include feelings of depression and lack of energy due to the lack of sunlight and typically colder months, hallmarks of winter in many parts of the world.



Coping Tips

Try these suggestions to help manage your feelings of depression during and after the holidays:

Find support in others. Try confiding in trusted family members and friends about how you have been feeling. An understanding loved one can give you the strength and support you need to help cope with depressive feelings.

Manage your stress. Learn effective ways to reduce your stress and anxiety, which may minimize your feelings of depression.

Exercise regularly. Regular fitness activities can improve your mood and boost your self-esteem. Because a lack of sunlight may be contributing to your depression, exercise outdoors for a double benefit.

Eat right. Discipline yourself to avoid environments that may encourage bingeing. Stick to a nutritionally balanced diet. Avoid alcohol, which is a depressant.

Get the proper amount of sleep. Experts recommend at least seven to eight hours a night. Resist the urge to oversleep, and try to maintain a regular sleeping schedule.

Make more time for recreational, fun activities. Try to spend more time outdoors, especially on sunny days.

Be more social. Stay in touch with friends and family. Get out more often, and participate in enjoyable activities such as attending social gatherings, seeing movies and having lunch or dinner with friends.

Consider using a lightbox. These devices have been used successfully to treat SAD.

Educate yourself. Learn all you can about depression, support groups in your area and ways to manage your feelings.

 **Talk to a professional.** If these feelings linger for several weeks and are interfering with your ability to enjoy life and function effectively, seek help through the GuidanceResources program. A caring therapist can assist you in exploring your feelings day or night any day, but especially during the holidays.



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