

# Holiday blues. It's the season to be jolly?

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Are you looking forward or dreading the festive season? Holidays are supposed to be a joyful time for fun, happiness, and celebrations. But even in years without a global pandemic, many people find the holidays a challenging time. Instead of being a season of joy, some may experience 'holiday blues' with increased stress, feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety.



## Will I get the “blues”?

While holiday blues may be intense and unsettling, the good news is that it usually subsides after the holiday season is over and daily routines are resumed. There are many causes for holiday blues, including overindulgence, loneliness, and bereavement. Symptoms and signs such as changes in eating and sleeping habits, irritability, and fatigue, feeling overwhelmed and stressed, and not experiencing happiness and joy during once pleasurable activities may mimic clinical depression.

## Take control of the holidays

Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your health. Try to prevent stress from taking its toll on you by following these useful tips:

- **Get in touch with your feelings.** Whether you experience grief due to the loss of a loved one, the loss of a tradition, or the loss of time and memories with your family, realize that it's normal to feel sad. Take time to cry or express your feelings.
- **Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Reinitiate contact with family or friends.
- **Give:** Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.
- **Spend wisely:** Do not try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts! Before you go shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend and stick to your budget.
- **Be realistic:** Set yourself realistic goals for the holidays! The holidays don't have to be perfect. Often time will fly by, and you never get to do what you planned to, also contributing to disappointment.
- **Learn to say no without feeling guilty:** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed.

- **Maintain a healthy balance:** Whilst holidays are a time of joy and celebration and an opportunity to spoil yourself don't go overboard! Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt.
- **Recharge:** Maintain healthy habits, including eating, sleeping, and exercise. Lack of sleep and inconsistent eating can worsen irritability and fatigue.
- **Use free time and great weather wisely:** Extra time for exercise, not only benefits your health but also gives great opportunities for connecting with family and friends. Spending times outdoors and in nature rejuvenates yourself mentally and physically.
- **Take care of yourself:** Schedule time for activities that make you feel good. It might be reading a book, going to the movies, getting a massage, listening to music you love, or taking your dog for a walk. It's okay to prioritise alone time you need to recharge.
- **Unplug:** Be aware of how the information culture can produce undue stress and adjust the time you spend reading news and social media as you see fit.
- **Keep up or seek therapy.** If you're feeling overwhelmed, it may be time to visit a mental health professional or your doctor. They can help you pinpoint specific events that trigger you and help you create an action plan to change them. If you're already seeing a therapist, keep it up.

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers, such as financial pressures or personal demands, so you can combat them before they lead to a meltdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.

Sources:

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