



Tips to Beat the Holiday Blues

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Students often mention that they wish the holiday season was already over and done with. They also report high levels of stress related to Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanzaa. Considering the amount of travel and expenses involved, anxiety at this time of year is not uncommon. There are also those who do not have a family to visit. Others do have a family, but do not have the money to travel and buy gifts. Unfortunately, some do not want to visit their relatives or have to choose which set of relatives with whom they will spend time.

Television is constantly selling an image of the perfect time for presents, relationships, and food. Don't buy it. During the holidays, we tend to view everyone else as having more fun than we are. The truth is, the holidays are not perfect for anyone. If a significant other was a pain in the neck in October, that person will still be a pain in the neck in December. Recognize that it is a tough time of the year and there will be stress. We need to know what to expect and realize that our feelings are OK.

Don't take on tasks that you don't really want to do. If you like to entertain friends, but can't afford the food, host a potluck supper. Let some things slide. Your family or friends will survive if your house or apartment is dusty. Also, don't deprive yourself of food, which has symbolic meaning during the holidays. This does not mean to stuff yourself; eat a low-calorie snack a half hour before a big meal. It is also important to take time out to do something you enjoy, like jogging, reading or renting your favorite movie to watch alone.

Instead of stressing over buying expensive gifts, you might write to your favorite relatives, letting them know your feelings. You can also give live plants, which cost considerably less than items such as a DVD player, video games, jewelry, etc. Some also choose to volunteer at nursing homes or homeless shelters.

The following are some tips to combat holiday stress.

- Reconnect or establish support systems.
- Take part in fun and laughter.
- Allow yourself to grieve if needed.
- Create new traditions or restart old ones.
- Make an "I'm thankful for ..." list
- Practice good health habits.
- Accept what you cannot change.
- Let yourself play.
- Don't over-plan.
- Be patient and tolerant of self and others.
- Schedule private time.
- Continue the holiday spirit after the holidays.



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