

Mental Health & The Holiday Blues



64% of people with a mental illness report holidays make their condition worse.

The holiday season beams a spotlight on everything that is difficult about living with depression.

The pressure to be joyful and social is tenfold.



68% of people feel financially strained around the holidays.

The "holiday blues" can stem from a variety of sources, such as current events, personal grief, loneliness, illnesses of all kinds, economic concerns, separation from family members and relationship issues like separation or divorce.



50% are unable to spend time with loved ones.

There's this idea that holiday gatherings with family are supposed to be joyful and stress-free. That's not the case. Family relationships are complicated.

The highest rate for child psychiatric hospitalizations occurs in winter.

63% of people experience too much pressure and 57% unrealistic expectations.



Helpful Tips for Getting Through



Don't worry about how things "should" be.

There's a lot of cultural pressure during the holidays. We tend to compare ourselves with these idealized notions of perfect families and perfect holidays. But remember, other families doubtlessly have their own stressors and ruminations to contend with.



Be realistic.

You can't please everyone the rest of the year, so why try to during the holidays? Saying 'no,' whether to gatherings or a present on someone's wish list that you simply cannot find, can be one of the most challenging parts of the season. Put your own mental and physical well-being needs first.



Don't try to be a superhero (or heroine).

We all have complex family dynamics. Acknowledge them, but also acknowledge that, despite the season's near-universal message of unity and peace, it's not a realistic outlook. If you must spend time with people who upset you, try to limit your exposure.



Volunteer.

Volunteering can be a great source of comfort, simply knowing that you're making a small dent in the lives of people who are not as fortunate. This is a great strategy if you feel lonely or isolated. Consider seeking out other community, religious or other social events.



Keep your own well-being in mind.

Yes, the holidays are technically the season of giving. But that doesn't mean you should take yourself completely out of the equation—instead, add yourself to it. Give yourself some time away from the hype, even if it's just for half an hour a day. Exercise can also help, with its known anti-anxiety, anti-depression effect. Even a small amount of exercise, such as parking further from the store, can do much to improve your state of mind.



Give it some thought.

Do you really have to do everything on your list? Ask yourself, 'Why am I doing things that make me miserable?' Draw up a list of reasons why you engage in these holiday traditions, and then a list of reasons why you shouldn't. Just making a simple pro and con list will remind you that you do have a choice.



Make sure that the "holiday blues" haven't become a scapegoat.

You could be experiencing Recurrent Depression with Seasonal Pattern (previously known as Seasonal Affective Disorder) or another biological or psychological cause. If these are persistent feelings, make an appointment to see your doctor.