

# Holiday Blues

FIRSTCALL

The holidays can be a time of joy, happiness, and celebration with family and friends. For many people, however, the holiday season is a time of sadness, gloom, and even depression. These feelings can be a result of many factors. Some common causes of holiday blues are the loss of a family member or friend, increased stress and pressure, unresolved grief, family misunderstandings or conflict, financial burden, and fatigue. Holiday blues can affect both men and women of all ages.

People respond to the stress of the holidays in different ways. Reactions may include excessive drinking, over-eating or not eating enough, difficulty sleeping, and avoiding friends and family. There are ways to prevent or decrease the depression that many people feel during the holiday season. It is important to establish realistic goals and expectations and remember that the holidays will not prevent sadness or loneliness. If someone has experienced a death or romantic break-up, he or she should not be obligated to feel festive. It may help to talk openly and express feelings rather than trying to ignore them. Take advantage of social support during this time with family and friends. Another way to help reduce stress is to know your spending limit and stick to it. Set a detailed budget and do not put pressure on yourself if you cannot buy expensive gifts. Planning ahead is also a way to decrease stress during this hectic time. It may be helpful to develop a calendar of specific events, although it is important to remember to schedule some quiet time and relaxation.

The holiday blues are usually a temporary and seasonal occurrence, however, there may be an underlying problem that needs to be addressed. Depression is a serious, yet treatable condition. Remember that there is help available in your community through crisis lines, support groups, community mental health centers, and private practitioners.

Source : SAMHSA (<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/highlights/2000/December/holidayblues/default.asp>)