

Beating the Holiday Blues

by Kathryn Feldman and David Kemp, M.D.

The holiday season is fast approaching— accompanied by parties, gifts, and time with family and friends. Although the holidays often bring wonderful memories, for many of us it can also be a time of sadness. These “holiday blues” can stem from loneliness, family tensions, financial issues, and fatigue from exhausting holiday preparations. Below are a few tips on how to make the best of the holiday season:

- **Set realistic expectations.** Many people get caught up in nostalgic media images of fresh fallen snow, children’s laughter, and eternal happiness; this can set us up for unrealistic expectations and then disappointment. To avoid this frustration, be honest with yourself about the time, energy, and money you can put into gift-giving and attending events. For certain gifts, shop online to avoid the hassle of crowds. Set a spending limit, maintain the structure of a routine week, and make time for stress-relieving activities: exercise, sleep, and those well-deserved moments of relaxation.
- **Address feelings of loneliness.** The holidays often magnify feelings of being alone. Realize that others also feel this way. Make an effort to get connected with others by seeing family and friends, attending religious services, or volunteering your time to help those in need.

Typically, the holiday blues are mild and will only last from 4 - 10 days. It is important to differentiate the holiday blues from more serious depression. Often, depression is accompanied by changes in your sleep habits, appetite, and energy level. If you experience such changes, or if you find yourself feeling persistently sad or hopeless, you may benefit from talking with a professional. Fortunately, treatments are available to help relieve these unpleasant feelings. For more information on depression or for a consultation, call Dr. Kemp at 216/844-2865.

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