

# UPDATE

December 2020

## When the Holidays Aren't Happy: Handling the Holiday Blues During COVID-19

The holidays are supposed to be a time of joy and laughter, family, friends, and fun. While we try to be involved in merriment and holiday traditions, many of us will experience a different holiday season due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For some folks the holidays can be dreary, sad, or even isolating to begin with. The holidays can often serve to accentuate feelings of loss or symptoms of depression.

If you or someone you know is prone to suffering during the holiday season, what follows are a few helpful hints to set a course for healing during this time of the pandemic:

**1.) Seek support.** The first step in healing is learning to let others help you. Turn to a trusted friend or relative to talk to. Call on a professional counselor or therapist to help you through the holiday season.

**2.) Stay busy.** Although the last thing you may feel like doing is keeping active, a busy schedule can really take your mind off feelings of loneliness and/or depression. Engage in activities even if you are not feeling your best. Practice Tai-Chi or yoga, from your home, or take walks around your neighborhood.

**3.) Keep in touch with family and friends.** If you can't see your friends or family to spend time with during the holidays, find different situations which offer companionship and connection. Plan a phone call to a friend or setting up a time for Zoom video calls or FaceTime with family members as a



way to stay in touch. Although you may have to push yourself to connect with others, once you are engaged you are likely to forget the initial discomfort.

**4.) Pampering is an important present.** One of the greatest gifts you can offer yourself is permission to be pampered. Think about the things that help you relax. Curl up with a good book and let yourself get lost in an interesting plot or binge-watch TV shows you've been trying to catch up on.

**5.) Healthy habits can help you heal.** The connection between mind and body is a strong one. This is why it is particularly important that when you experience holiday

blues you pay special attention to your body. Begin by getting enough hours of rest and going out of your way to eat healthy. Exercise is also a key component to remaining healthy. If the thought of committing yourself to a daily regime sounds too overwhelming, think of easy fun things you can do to keep your mind and body active. Even as the weather gets colder for winter, get out for some fresh air to help you relax and clear the mind.

A case of the holiday blues can be difficult to deal with. There may be sadness in not doing our usual holiday traditions this year, but there can be joy in making new ones. When you focus on taking care of yourself and allowing others to do the same, you offer yourself the best opportunity to engage in the joy of the holiday season.