

# UPDATE

December 2023

## When the Holidays Aren't Happy: Handling the Holiday Blues

The holidays are supposed to be a time of joy and laughter, family, friends, and fun. While the majority of us are involved in merriment, there is a portion of the population that experiences little joy or exuberance over the holiday season. For these folks the holidays can be dreary, sad, or even isolating. 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:



**Preparation can result in prevention.** Planning ahead can really make a difference. If for example, the holidays make you feel lonely due to a recent loss of a loved one, or perhaps a divorce or separation, consider taking a day trip to visit a friend or relative. The change of venue can do a lot to lift your mood.

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

**Stay busy.** Although the last thing you may feel like doing is keeping active, a packed schedule can really take your mind off feelings of loneliness and/or depression. Engage in activities you typically enjoy even if you are not feeling your best.

**Keep in the company of others.** If you don't have a group of friends or family to spend time with, find situations which offer

companionship. Join the local library book club, contact the local food bank or soup kitchen and volunteer your time. Although you may have to push yourself to connect with others, once you are engaged you are likely to forget the initial discomfort.

**Pampering is an important present.** One of the greatest gifts you can offer yourself is permission to be pampered. Think about the comforts that help you relax. Treat

yourself to a manicure or massage. Curl up with a good book and let yourself get lost in an interesting plot.

**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. Take some time to enjoy outdoor activities like hiking, biking or skiing, or even a brisk walk around the block can help you relax and clear your mind.

A case of the holiday blues can be difficult to deal with. 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.

**About Four Winds.** . . . *Four Winds Hospitals are located on two serene campuses in New York State. Four Winds Westchester is 50 minutes north of midtown Manhattan. Four Winds Saratoga is located in Saratoga Springs, 30 minutes north of Albany. Four Winds Hospitals is a leading provider of specialized inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services for children, adolescents and adults.*

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