

How to beat the holiday blues
By Jeffrey Bornstein, MS, LPCC

Do you get the “Bah humbugs!” this time of year while everyone else is being jolly? Well, you’re not alone. Not everyone looks forward to singing carols, eating family meals, and exchanging presents with loved ones. Many people experience:

- Difficulties sleeping;
- Increased irritability;
- Lack of interest or pleasure in activities or being with people;
- Excessive guilt;
- Fatigue; and/or
- Arguing with family members and friends.

That does not sound like a recipe for holiday cheer. These holiday blues can be brought on by increased stress due to financial difficulties for paying for presents, or the effort of organizing holiday parties and meals. Other people experience disappointment due to unrealistic expectations of what the holidays should be. These expectations can be based on romanticized memories of past celebrations or idealized versions of the holidays represented on television and in the movies. Many people feel depressed or lonely due to the inability to be with loved ones due to death or geographical separation. Finally, the holiday blues can be brought on by changes in diet and daily routine. Eating large meals and changing what we do each day can throw our systems out of whack, including our mental health system.

How can you beat the holiday blues?

Just as there are many different reasons for experiencing the holiday blues, there are also many different ways to beat them. The following is a list of tips that can reduce the stress of the holidays and elevate your mental state.

- Try to maintain a daily routine; including eating right and getting enough sleep.
- Set realistic goals on what you want to accomplish this holiday season. For example, set a limit on the number of presents you are going to buy for friends and family. Also, set a limit on how many holiday functions you are going to attend.
- Set aside time to grieve for those who can’t be with you.
- Balance your needs with the needs of others. For example, if you can only handle one hour with Aunt Susie during family functions, give yourself permission to periodically leave and take a walk around the block.
- Be kind to yourself. For example, allow yourself to be sad if you feel sad. Or watch a good movie if that is what you like to do. Think of it as a present to yourself.
- Spend time with those that you care about. You don’t have to attend every office function and every party you’re invited to if you just want to spend some time with your spouse and family.

- Remember that the holidays will eventually end. They do every year.

Try experimenting with these suggestions to come up with the right combination and balance for your situation. If you find that you still are having trouble beating the holiday blues, you might benefit from talking to me in a safe and confidential environment. I can be reached on my confidential voicemail at **(323) 362-6555**.