

Beating the holiday blues

Practical tips to help keep the season bright.



Mind
& Body

'Tis the season to be jolly, or is it? The holidays are upon us and that means getting together with loved ones, exchanging gifts and sharing good wishes. But for some, feelings of sadness and anxiety seem to loom over the festivities.

According to the National Mental Health Association, reasons for the holiday blues are varied, ranging from physical fatigue and financial concerns, to strained family relationships.

Experts say one of the fastest routes to holiday depression is setting unrealistic expectations. It's easy to fall into a pattern of comparing what was to what is, as we try to create our own Norman Rockwell memories.

The good news is that although the holiday blues are common, they are not inevitable. These practical tips will help you keep "Bah, humbug" from nestling into your holiday perspective.

Let go of the past

Don't be disappointed if your holidays aren't like they used to be; life brings changes. Embrace the present, and don't dwell on the fact that the "good old days" are gone. Conversely, if old traditions remind you of unhappy memories, start new ones. There are no rules that dictate how one should spend the holidays.

Give yourself a break by being realistic

Before you begin to plan your holiday celebrations, set the tone for the season and aim for realistic—not super-human—goals. Your

loved ones will enjoy your laid-back demeanor more than they will your perfect figgy pudding.

Delegate

Don't try to do it all. Break down tasks and ask others for help. Things will become more manageable. For instance, if holiday baking is on your traditional "to-do" list, invite a few friends or family members over to help you with this year's baking project. Set aside this time as a means to reconnect with the people you love and then enjoy the delicious results of your collective efforts.

Spend some time alone

Some people love the energy and exuberance of holiday parties and activities while others consider it emotionally taxing. If you find yourself getting a

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TIPS

- + Don't try to do it all. Break down tasks and ask others for help with those that seem overwhelming.
- + Spend some time alone. Find a quiet place to relax and recharge.
- + Reach out to someone who needs a friend. It can be the best antidote to seasonal sadness and self-pity.