

little anxious, recognize the fact that your stress level is up and you need time out. Find a quiet place to relax and recharge your batteries daily, even if it's only for a short period of time. People around will typically be too caught up in their own holiday mayhem and merry-making to even miss you.

Avoid excessive eating and drinking

It's easy to overindulge around the holidays, but too much eating and drinking will only make you feel out of control and more depressed. Make a pledge to yourself not to overdo it on any front. And don't forget to get enough sleep. Sleep deprivation is frequently seen as the root of depression for many people.¹

Help others

It's hard to feel down while you're busy helping someone else. Reach out to someone who needs a friend. It can be the best antidote to seasonal sadness and self-pity. Connect to the real meaning of the holidays and find someone who is struggling more than you are, then lend them a helping hand. Volunteer at a local soup kitchen or spend time with an elderly relative, friend or someone you don't

know who lives alone in an assisted living center. The holidays can be particularly difficult for older people who have lost loved ones.

Seek a sacred space

The commercialism that surrounds this time of year can make anyone a cynic. Take a break from what feels like a materialistic point of view and drop into a Christian church, Jewish synagogue, Muslim mosque or Hindu temple or ... you get the idea. Sometimes just sitting in a place where spiritual growth is nurtured can bring a sense of peace, especially during hectic, stressful times. Most places of worship welcome all people, even those just looking for a touch of grace in the midst of a chaotic and disconnected day.

Forgive

"Forgive all who have offended you, not for them, but for yourself."—**Harriet Nelson.**

Make the decision to absolve people who have offended and hurt you—those from your past, your work, your family—and forgive them all. Read the stories of people like Martin Luther King, Jr., or Nelson Mandela, who have used forgiveness to move moun-

tains. If they can do it, so can you.

If, despite your best efforts to remain upbeat this holiday season you find yourself feeling down for an extended period of time, get help. Don't try to "tough it out" alone. There are many options available that can make a significant difference in your outlook and in the quality of your life. 🧠

References

1. Buysse D. Ask the sleep expert: sleep and depression. National Sleep Foundation Web site: www.sleepfoundation.org. Accessed Sept. 23, 2008.

Suggested reading

Factsheet: depression. National Mental Health Association Web site: www.nmha.org. Accessed Sept. 23, 2008.



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