

Beating the Christmas Blues ...



IT IS NOT UNCOMMON for people to experience depression during and immediately after the Christmas holiday season. Should you experience a case of the Christmas blues, here are a few tips to help you get through ...

Christmas depression can be caused for a number of reasons

You may have grown up in a family that did not celebrate Christmas but surrounded by families that did, feeling left out. At this time it might help to share your experiences with others who grew up in the same situation.

If you feel sad at Christmas time, do not try to force your feelings to go away, and do not let well-meaning friends or relatives try to talk you out of them. You are probably feeling grief, whether it is about something in the present—for example, your ex has the kids this year—or a childhood experience that you might not even remember, such as Christmas being spoiled because your parents were mad at each other. If you bury grief instead of fully feeling it, it just stays inside you, preventing you from experiencing good feelings.

If you are depressed because you do not have a family, you have stopped seeing your family, or they are far away, do not put yourself down for being 'different'. In today's urbanised world, many people are in the same situation. Some are feeling lonely, while others are having a good time with people they have chosen to be with. If all your friends have families, you might think about how to get to know people who don't.

If your family gets you down but you have chosen to be with them for the holidays anyway, go for damage control. If possible, limit the amount of time you spend with them and have an escape route in case things start getting really uncomfortable. For example, take your own car instead of having to wait till somebody else is ready to leave, and

plan ahead how you will take a short break alone if you find yourself unable to think clearly: for example, go for a walk, or even just to the bathroom. If you have a support system independent of your family, use it; if not, make a New Year's resolution to start building one.

Watch out for January. Sometimes Christmas depression appears after Christmas or gets worse then. If your depression becomes so severe that you are afraid you might do something dangerous, phone a help centre such as Lifeline (13 11 14) or go to the emergency department of your local hospital.

If you already know all this and you are still depressed, seek professional help. Nearly all depression responds well to appropriate counseling or therapy, and many people have found anti-depressants prescribed by their doctor to be helpful as well. Depression can be treated and it can be beaten.

Tips offered by psychotherapist Beth Mares from - www3.sympatico.ca/beth/seasonal_affective_disorder.htm

The Three R's

It may be the season to be jolly, but as many as one person in four has a bout with holiday depression this time of year. The potential is very high this time of year for psychological, physical and financial stress, so it can be useful to apply the "three R's" to help keep the holiday blues on the run.

First, be Realistic - Don't set overly high expectations, acknowledge feelings of sadness and don't repress them. Rather, seek out social support and companionship, such as through a community group or church.

Second, be Reasonable - It's best to eat and drink in moderation, rather than do more than usual just because it's the holidays. And moderation applies to money too. A lot of people can't spend what they'd like on gifts or they spend more than they can afford. Either way, it can be depressing.

Third, get some Rest - Don't try to do more than you can comfortably do. Watch your time, and schedule some breaks for peace and quiet. Also, share your load with someone else. If you're feeling stressed and/or overburdened, try to get relatives or friends to give you a helping hand.

From 'Beating the Christmas Blues' - www.applesforhealth.com/holidayblues1.html



SANE
Helpline

Helping Families

Every year the SANE Helpline receives thousands of calls from worried family members, who make up 40% of callers, providing them with information, advice and referral to relevant services.

The SANE Helpline has a new, FREE easy-to-remember number:

1800 18 SANE (7263)

Callers can contact the Helpline free from anywhere in Australia