

- ☺ Be sure to **allow yourself to feel whatever you feel**. Keep in mind that it is normal to feel sad and lonely, especially at holiday time. Remember that it's OK to think about the past, but after you do, focus on the present.
- ☺ **Encourage yourself** to try to be the best you can be, and try not to set unrealistic expectations for yourself or others.
- ☺ Make **a list of all that you actually have**, and don't just include material things. Keep in mind the things money can't buy, like respect, caring, and friendships. It's OK to feel bad about what you don't have, but gently redirect yourself to focus on all you do have. If your list feels short, think harder!
- ☺ Spend some time doing **something nice for yourself**. Remember to treat yourself with kindness just as you would a holiday guest.
- ☺ Do your best to avoid situations that will result in drinking and drugging, overeating, and overspending. Remember: **sobriety is an attitude**.

For some people, the holidays can be a really hard time. If you know someone who doesn't look like they just have the blues, be sure to talk to them about how they are feeling.

**This goes for you, too**, especially if you're *feeling really bad or having thoughts of suicide*:

**If you're on center**, go immediately to any staff person. Tell them what's going on, and you will get the help you need.

**If you're off center**, tell someone how you are feeling, or call 800-273-8255 or text HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor.

Even if you're not feeling all that bad, but just want to talk about the holidays, the blues, the pandemic or whatever, talk with any staff member you trust or get in touch with your Counselor or the Mental Health Team in the Wellness Center.

By **keeping in mind the tips in this brochure**, you'll be able to cope with the **holiday blues**, which sometimes can feel intense but usually don't last too long. For most of us, they usually last for a few hours to a few weeks before or just after the holiday, and disappear when we go back to our daily routines, but with the pandemic, they may hang around, mixed in with the stress related to COVID-19. If they do, be sure to contact the Mental Health Team in Wellness.

However the holidays go for you, practice the self-care tips in this brochure to stay healthy, which is especially important during the pandemic. If you do, you'll be jetting your way to success!



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**HO**



**Uh Oh!**

## How To Cope With The Holiday Blues

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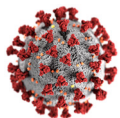
Christmas! Kwanzaa! Hanukah! New Year's Eve! It's the holiday season, a time of joy and excitement for little kids and for those who are still young at heart. Eat, Drink, and Be Merry! Be Happy!



So, what's not to like about the holidays?

Well, for one thing, not everyone is merry at this time of year. In fact, the holiday season can be one of the most difficult periods of the year for many people. Even for those whose lives are basically fine, it's still a time that we look at what and who we have and don't have, and remember years past. As we do, we have feelings about where our lives are at today and times that already gone. Some of those feelings are good ones (like when we felt loved), and some are not so good (like when a relationship ended). We can have really strong feelings at holiday time when . . .

- ☹️ We remember those we have lost, and wish they were here with us today.
- ☹️ We want to give something special to a person we love, but don't have any money to do it with.
- ☹️ We wish we could have a happy family, but the reality is that the family is busted up by divorce, drugs, abuse, violence, or hard times.
- ☹️ We want to be with that special someone whom we've not yet found or who once was here but now is gone.



On top of all that, this year we are in the middle of an awful pandemic, it is hard or impossible to spend the holidays with the people we want to be with, and we're stuck having to wear a mask and to basically stay inside and away from others.

Together with changes in our daily routines, all of these changes, wishes and memories can leave us sad, lonely, worn out, or frustrated. Just when we're supposed to be happy, our lives can feel turned upside down with what's often called the **holiday blues** (which can occur at any holiday or vacation time, and can be how you feel during the pandemic).



When you have the **holiday blues**, you may have symptoms such as:

- ☹️ Depression, with feelings of sadness and emptiness.
- ☹️ Anxiety, worry, and even agitation, especially about being alone, being broke, or what next year is going to bring.
- ☹️ Relapse into drinking and using drugs because of all the partying and how hard it is to be around drugs and the people we once used with.
- ☹️ Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep (or even sleeping too much).
- ☹️ Feeling overly guilty or worthless.
- ☹️ Difficulty thinking clearly or concentrating.
- ☹️ Not feeling interested in doing what usually brings us pleasure, such as being with friends, listening to music, or dancing.
- ☹️ Having physical symptoms not related to a cold, flu, or other illness, including headaches, stomach aches, and non-specific pains.

**So, what should you do to cope with the holiday blues? Here are some ideas:**

- 😊 Don't forget to **use** the **stress busters** you already know:
  - 😊 Continue doing the regular **exercise** you have been doing.
  - 😊 Practice **Deep Breathing**, and give meditation a try:
    - 😊 Check out an app such as *Stop, Breath & Think*,
    - 😊 Watch a breathing video to relax, such as:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IycfXX7ST5Y&list=PLdenNDL2g3lq8ywO4IzaIYNvqamnrBMf>

- 😊 Keep a **balance** of activity and rest (you really *don't* have to stay up gaming 'til 4 a.m. every night!).
- 😊 Make sure you **eat** a **healthy** diet (yes, with lots of veggies and fruits!).
- 😊 **Talk to someone you can trust**, and share your thoughts and feelings.
- 😊 **Spend some time doing something for someone else:** **In doing so, you will surely help yourself.** If you're home, do an extra chore; if you're on center, ask staff if they could use a hand getting something done. You also can help out online, such as at <https://www.powerof.org/volunteer>. The holidays are a great time to volunteer to help those who are struggling, especially during this pandemic.

