



Employee Assistance Program

Holidays and Depression

Holidays are joyful times of festive celebrations with family and friends. And yet for many, that image is far from reality. Loss, loneliness, and nostalgia can make holidays difficult for people who feel that the present holidays cannot compete with glorified memories of past celebrations, or who mourn the loss of loved ones no longer in their lives. Divorce, death, and distance from loved ones are especially painful at this time. If you feel the holidays bringing you down, consider the following to help you through the season.

What You Can Do

- **Maintain Balance.** While indulging in festive feasts and festivities is often part of the season, don't use the holidays as an excuse to let go of a healthy and balanced lifestyle. Maintain consistency with meals, bedtimes, and exercise routines. These routines can help manage or reduce stress and depression for both children and adults.
- **Quality over Quantity.** Whether it's participating in holiday events, gift giving, or planning meals, keep it simple. Seek out meaningful ways to enjoy the holiday rather than trying to do, buy, or make it all. For example, try giving unique gifts that can't be bought, such as writing your family history or offering to clean a loved one's house. Or, rather than attending every holiday event, have your family decide on one or two and really try to make those events special.
- **Reach Out.** Some individuals may face an unusual or difficult holiday season due to family turmoil, such as the loss or absence of a family member. To help cope with difficult times it helps to set up planned events with people you love, be they friends or family.
- **Check-in.** It's easy to forget to care for yourself when you're busy caring for the people and events around you. Every so often, especially when life seems chaotic, take a step back and check-in with yourself. Consider your physical health, mental health and emotional health—and make adjustments where necessary.

How do I know if I need to seek professional help? Depression is different from normal feelings of sadness, grief, or low energy. It is not a 'blue' mood that you can suddenly snap out of, or a sign of weakness. Depression is a chronic illness, and it's treatable. If you feel that you are dealing with more than you can handle on your own, or if you have felt down or depressed for more than two weeks, contact your Employee Assistance Program or other professional counselor.

Some Signs to Watch For

- A sad or depressed mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Lack of energy
- Changes in appetite and/or weight
- Withdrawal from others
- Increased sleeping
- Anxiety
- Lack of concentration or indecision

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For more information on this topic or for further assistance, please contact your Employee Assistance Program



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