Beating the Holiday Blues



Although Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza, and other holidays are expected to be a time of joy and family get-togethers, the gap between a person's expectations and the reality of the experience can be disappointing and painful. Time is a precious gift of which most people today have little. To ensure that your holidays are pleasurable, it's important to evaluate how you spend your time and have realistic expectations.

What can a person do to beat the holiday blues?

- **Determine which activities** and traditions are most important and bring you joy. It can be helpful to list the activities: Gift-giving, sharing meals, sending holiday cards, decorating, entertaining, attending religious services, etc. Engage in those that have true meaning and perpetuate happiness. Consider forgoing those that are stress-inducing or do not bring happiness.
- Create new traditions. If you have been recently widowed or divorced, holidays may cause stress and pain. Consider starting new traditions to replace the old ones.
- **Curb spending.** The holidays also prompt people to spend more than they can afford. Make a holiday

- budget that includes the cost of extra meals, postage for mailing gifts, and tickets to special events. Look for ways to keep the spirit and cut the cost.
- Share the burden. Ask family members and friends for help when preparing meals, buying gifts, or entertaining.
- Take care of yourself. Eat right, exercise, and get enough sleep. Be careful not to indulge on high-sugar foods at parties or consume too much alcohol.
- Recognize signs of stress. When you begin to get frustrated, take a few deep breaths or take a break.
- **Practice patience.** The holidays are not likely to change the attitudes of relatives and friends who may be critical from time to time. Acknowledge these behaviors and plan how you will respond to keep joy in your holiday.

Need more information?

Occupational therapists are skilled in helping people deal with stress, depression, and other emotional issues. If you would like to consult an occupational therapist, practitioners are available through most hospitals, community clinics, and medical centers.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are trained in helping both adults and children with a broad range of physical, developmental, and psychological conditions. Practitioners also offer clients wellness techniques that may prevent injury and disease. Contact your local health officials for more information.