

# Depression, Stress and the Holidays

Adapted from: Sound Options, A Care Management Company in Puget Sound, WA by Lorraine E. Cummings, LCSW, C-ASWCM of Cummings Care Management, Inc.

The Holidays can be a time of festivities, family gatherings, joy and cheer. But for some, the Holidays can also bring on added anxiety, loneliness and sad memories.

Many factors can cause the 'Holiday blues' such as stress, fatigue, unrealistic expectations, financial obligations and inability to be with loved ones. There are many demands on us this time of year and the blues can creep up on us in many forms. For some, the blues trigger sadness, lack of ability to sleep, over-eating or excessive drinking. Others may spend too much money as a way to cope or isolate themselves from others. Some people experience 'after the Holidays let down' due to the fast pace of the preceding months.

How do you cope during the Holidays? Here's a few simple guidelines:

1. Keep expectations of the holidays manageable. Try to set realistic goals for yourself especially if you have the added responsibility of being a caregiver.
2. Be realistic of what you can and cannot do. This is not the time to run for superhero of the holiday season. Spread out your activities to lessen the stress and increase the joy.
3. It is OK to feel sorrow, lonely or apprehension during this time of year. Recognize and validate your feelings.
4. Do something fun! Visit the snow and build a snowman, take a drive to see holiday decorations, go window shopping, take in a holiday program, make some hot chocolate or simply take a moment to relax.
5. Life brings changes and each holiday season is different. Try not to compare one season with another but honor the past, and enjoy this season with renewed anticipation.
6. Do something for someone else.
7. Try something new.
8. Spend time with supportive and caring people.
9. Eat right, get some exercise. Eating poorly and drinking too much can increase your feelings of depression.
10. Save some time for yourself! Let others share in the planning responsibilities. There is only one you, and fatigue and burnout will increase your Holiday blues.