

Happy Holidays??

Everyone is happy at this time of year- aren't they? There seems to be the expectation that this is a happy time of year. The signs of it are everywhere- in the store decorations, television commercials, and holiday songs on the radio. But what if we aren't feeling so happy? What if our family lives too far away to see them over the holiday season, or we are trying to cope with the loss of a loved one, or care for a spouse with a dementia or other illness. The holidays, often a time filled with increased pressures and stress, can feel even more so. What can help us cope?

Holiday Do's and Don'ts

- Do develop realistic goals and expectations.
 - Do what you can without thinking you HAVE TO do everything you used to.
 - Do prioritize what is most important to you.
 - Do delegate some tasks to others when possible.
 - Do allow yourself to feel sad or lonely- these are normal feelings and sometimes increase during holiday times.
 - Do try to find new ones to make the most of the holidays- develop new traditions, spend time with new friends.
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- Don't focus on the past.
 - Don't think things have to be done the same way they've always been done.
 - Don't expect family/healthcare/ and/or other concerns to disappear.
 - Don't spend money you can't afford to spend.
 - Don't drink or overeat as ways to cope with holiday stress.
 - Don't suffer in silence- find someone you can talk to.

Causes of Holiday Blues: many things can contribute to feeling blue this time of year. These are some of the more common reasons:

- Increased pressures
- Fatigue
- Unrealistic expectations
- Thinking of past holiday celebrations.
- Missing loved ones you can't be with this year.
- Change in daily routines.
- Physical ailments, pain, limited ability to get around.

Signs of Holiday Blues:

- Headaches
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Change in appetite- resulting in weight loss or weight gain
- Feeling anxious, restless
- Difficulty concentrating
- Excessive feelings of guilt
- Decreased interest or pleasure in the things you used to enjoy.

This article was brought to you courtesy of Diane Palmer, MSW, LCSW.