



CONNECT WITH EASE

Employee Assistance Service for Education



Monthly Article:

Coping With The Holiday Blues

**EASE CAN HELP DURING DIFFICULT TIMES
CONNECT WITH EASE:
(800) 882-1341**

Free confidential professional help for district employees and family members:

- Family troubles. Emotional distress.
- Job stress.
- Anxiety. Drug/alcohol use.
- Grief. Loss.
- Life transitions issues.

Professional counselors are ready to help. Call the EASE Hotline for 24/7 assistance.

MESSAGE FROM EASE

The holiday season is upon us and all that goes along with it. For many, the holidays bring a sense of love, togetherness, and joy. Although, it is important to remember that the holidays can also trigger difficult feelings in which people can feel a sense of inner conflict and grief. For those who have experienced recent losses, it may not feel right to celebrate or be joyful when the people we love are no longer with us. For many, the holiday blues are a real thing that can be felt physically and emotionally. This season, be thoughtful of others that may be struggling with the blues. Reach out, be a good listener, and ask how you can help. Develop an awareness of the spirit of kindness this season. Be kind to others.. and be kind to yourself. **Wishing you the best this holiday season, and if you are feeling the blues, please reach out to EASE for support! You are not alone and help is available.**

Research

There is solid evidence that the suicide rate in the United States does not spike around the holidays. According to the U.S. Center for Health Statistics, the suicide rate is highest between April and August with the months of November, December, and January having the lowest suicide rates. However, these statistics do not mean that the holiday blues are not a real phenomenon. Findings suggest that people do experience more stress, anxiety, and depression during the period between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. These feelings are usually short term and will lose intensity as the holidays pass.

COPING WITH THE HOLIDAY BLUES

By: EASE Staff

The holiday season often inspires feelings of warmth, joy and belonging for many, but for others this time of year can evoke feelings of loneliness, sadness, stress, and anxiety. As we are surrounded by holiday joy and cheer, music, media messages and traditions, one may feel a sense of overwhelm and pressure to feel in sync with the holiday crowd. However, it is not unusual for one to feel disconnected and out-of-sync during this time. The holiday season is a stressful time and can trigger feelings of depression for a number of reasons. The holidays can be a reminder of a loss, being away from family or friends, or extreme stress due to financial problems. These situations can make it difficult to find joy during the holiday season and if you find yourself feeling the blues... know that you're not alone. At some point, everyone experiences the holiday blues. The blues are characterized by feelings of sadness, hurt, loneliness, stress, or anger and can strike along with difficult life experiences. They are typically less serious and shorter in duration than clinical depression, but can still have a major impact on your ability to function normally. These blues can be especially overwhelming around Christmas and New Year's Eve as these holidays present challenging demands, from never-ending parties to family obligations.

It's important not to confuse the holiday blues with more severe forms of depression. For example, the holiday blues typically go away when the holiday season ends, meanwhile, clinical depression lasts longer and interferes with daily living. Additionally, clinical depression is a medical condition that requires treatment, whereas the holiday blues may need something as simple as talking to someone. If you find yourself feeling especially down, your appetite or sleep is being affected, or your feelings persist after the holidays, we recommend you to consult with a medical professional about how you're feeling.

<https://www.nami.org/blogs/nami-blog/november-2015/tips-for-managing-the-holiday-blues>
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20047544>
<https://www.healthline.com/health/depression/holiday-blues#postholiday-depression>
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/evidence-based-living/201712/what-we-know-about-the-holiday-blues>

TALK TO US

EASE has counselors if you want to talk.

(800) 882-1341

WHAT ARE THE HOLIDAY BLUES?

In a survey on the Holiday Blues

64% say they are affected

and 24% say the holidays affect them a lot.

So, what are they?

The Holiday Blues are temporary feelings of anxiety or depression during the holidays that can be associated with extra stress, unrealistic expectations or even memories that accompany the season.

This might include:

Fatigue	Loneliness or isolation
Tension	Sadness
Frustration	A sense of loss

The difference between the holiday blues and clinical anxiety or depression is that the feelings are temporary. However, short-term problems must still be taken seriously because they can lead to long-term mental health conditions.

Tips for avoiding the Holiday Blues

Stick to normal routines as much as possible.

Get enough sleep.

Take time for yourself, but don't isolate yourself. Spend time with supportive, caring people.

Eat and drink in moderation. Don't drink alcohol if you are feeling down.

Get exercise—even if it's only taking a short walk.

Make a to-do list. Keep things simple.

Set reasonable expectations and goals for holiday activities such as shopping, cooking, entertaining, attending parties or sending holiday cards.

Set a budget for holiday activities. Don't overextend yourself financially in buying presents.

Listen to music or find other ways to relax.

Remember

The holiday blues are short-term. Be patient. Take things week by week or day by day.

Learn more at <http://www.nami.org/holidayblues>