

Employee Enhancement Newsletter

Helpful Resources from your Employee Assistance Program

December 2012

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Help for the Holiday Blues

The holidays can be a stressful time. The festivities can lead to anxiety related to excessive shopping for friends and family, finding time for social obligations, worrying about holiday debt, and trying to do too much. You can detour from your everyday routine, neglecting proper nutrition and regular exercise. These pressures can lead to the phenomenon known as holiday depression or the holiday blues.



Will your holiday be blue?

According to the National Mental Health Association (NMHA), depression peaks over the holidays. The unrealistic expectations of the season, time and financial pressures, missing loved ones, and reflecting on past events as the year comes to an end can all contribute.

During the holidays, a person can experience depression, loneliness, sadness, isolation, anger, and abnormal sleep. Those who don't

experience depression can experience other symptoms such as headaches, tension, fatigue, excessive drinking, and over-eating.

It also is common to feel a holiday letdown after the holidays are over. The hectic holiday period and the feeling of being physically and emotionally drained can leave you with the sense of loss or frustration, and then that can turn into the blues.

The holiday blues can range from mild sadness during the holidays to severe depression, and they are often a normal reaction to life situations.

Terminology

Holiday blues should not be confused with clinical depression. Clinical depression is a disorder that may need to be relieved with medication, while the holiday blues could require something as simple as a good listener. Clinical depression, however, can be triggered in a number of ways at or just after the holidays.



Chat Reminder

Beating the Holiday Blues

Connect with Deer Oaks and a counselor for live confidential chats.

When:

December 19, 2012

Session Times (CST):

- 12:15 PM to 12:45 PM
- 6:00 PM to 6:30 PM





Help for the Holiday Blues

Continued...

There is also a tendency to link the holiday blues with seasonal affective disorder (SAD). SAD, however, is a diagnosable disorder that is associated with fewer hours of sunlight during the winter. Although people with the holiday blues also can be afflicted with SAD, the two are not directly related. People with SAD have symptoms of major depression not only throughout the holiday season, but also throughout the autumn and winter seasons.

Keeping the blues away

The holiday blues may be alleviated with something as simple as getting enough rest. People actually lose sleep during the holidays and end up shortchanging themselves. Consequences of not getting enough sleep might be cloudy thinking, irritability and inability to deal with everyday stress.

Other ways to help ease the blues are to eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and to start exercising. Also, make an effort to stay positive.

Tips to ease the blues

If you are experiencing holiday blues, try to decrease or alleviate them by doing these things:

- Talk honestly to someone.
- Limit alcohol intake.
- Stick within your normal life routine as much as possible.
- Set a realistic budget and then stick to it.
- Establish realistic goals and expectations.
- Do not label the season as a time to cure past problems.
- Don't be afraid to say no. That means don't attend parties when you don't really have time, don't take on obligations that will crowd your time and, don't overextend yourself.
- Find time for yourself.
- Enjoy free holiday activities.
- Try to celebrate the holidays in a different way.



The holiday blues can be quite common, but if you are feeling especially down—for example, your sleep or your appetite is affected—contact your health care provider or visit the National Mental Health Association online at <http://www.nmha.org> for help and guidance. If you are thinking about suicide, call 911 or your health care provider immediately.

<http://www.rmhonline.com/main/healthlibrary/533.aspx>

Hassle-Free Screening Tips While Traveling

If you're flying, make sure you familiarize yourself with the TSA screening process. You'll have smooth flying if you do the following when passing through airport security:

- **Clothing:** To maximize efficiency at the security checkpoint, avoid wearing clothing with metal and stow all metal items in carry-on luggage.
- **Zip it:** Make sure any liquids are in 3-ounce bottles in a clear, quart-size, zip top plastic bag.
- **Footwear:** Passengers are required to remove footwear for X-ray screening. Wearing footwear that can be easily removed helps speed the screening process.
- **Boarding pass and ID:** When approaching the security checkpoint, passengers will be asked to present a boarding pass and government-issued identification.
- **Electronics:** Large electronics such as laptops should be removed from their cases for X-ray screening. E-readers and small electronics may stay in luggage.
- **Locking checked bags:** When locking checked baggage, use a TSA recognized lock. A list of these locks can be found at www.tsa.gov.



Health-e headlines™

Let's Move

'Tis the season to—get active. Here are a few activities and steps suggested by the government's Let's Move initiative for active families:

- Give children toys that encourage physical activity such as balls, kites, and jump ropes.
- Encourage children to join a sports team or try a new physical activity.
- Limit TV time and keep the TV out of a child's bedroom.
- Enable a safe walk to and from school a few times a week.
- Walk around the block after a meal.
- Make a new house rule: no sitting still during TV commercials.
- Find time to spend together doing a fun activity: family park day, swim day, or bike day.
- Issue a family challenge to see who can be the first to achieve a physical activity goal.
- Encourage schools to hold recess before lunch to increase physical activity before mealtime.
- Volunteer to help with after-school physical activity programs or sports teams.

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It's never too late

The flu season can last through the spring, so if you did not get vaccinated in October, you can still get the flu shot in December or January.

A nasal vaccine is available for healthy children from age 2 and over, and for adults up to the age of 49. There are some restrictions so check with your doctor first, advises the CDC.

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Had a bad day?

Extending your normal exercise routine by a few minutes may be the solution, according to Penn State researchers, who found that people's satisfaction with life was higher on days when they exercised more than usual. The results were in the journal *Health Psychology*.

Health-e headlines™

An EAP Reminder

Life Can Be Hectic. The EAP Can Help You Find Your Balance.

Deer Oaks, your EAP, is always available to you and your household members.

If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.

Counselors are available 24/7 to provide you with immediate care.





Seasonal Tips

RESOLUTIONS YOU CAN DO

Think about these innovative (and easy-to-do) New Year's resolutions suggested by the experts at the University of Buffalo.

- Volunteer your time at veterans' centers to make returning war veterans feel at home.
- Floss your teeth every day to prevent heart disease.
- Be a humble leader in your workplace—you'll grow yourself and your organization.
- Talk to your child about bullying. Conversation is your best prevention about this and other topics.
- Escape into fantasy by reading novels such as Harry Potter. You'll read your way to a positive mood.

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HOW TO MAKE THOSE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS STICK

Tap into your company's wellness program to help you make and achieve your New Year's goals, suggests Alere Health.

Identify your core values. Make a list of your core values—such as vitality, health, honesty, compassion, security—to get a sense of what is really important to you. If you focus on the things that really matter to you, you'll be more likely to stick with the program.

Set your priorities. Select 3 or 4 of those values to target. Base your decision on values that you know would make you happier and improve your quality of life. Then look at what you are doing or not doing that is keeping that value from manifesting in your life. If vitality is one of your priorities, determine why it is lacking in your life.

Establish specific, measurable goals. After you determine the changes you want to make, set specific, measurable goals to track your progress. One of the reasons that many people fail with resolutions is that their goals are too vague. Examples of vague goals include making the commitment to exercise more or eat better. For example, if adding more fruits and vegetables to your diet is your goal, determine how many daily servings to add by a specific date.

Be realistic. If you've never been to a gym and promise to start working out daily, you'll likely quit within a month. The best health and wellness programs teach people to gradually reduce their unhealthy habits so that they can learn behaviors that will last. Go for ridiculously easy, and you'll achieve your goal every time.

Be creative. Who says resolutions have to be about weight loss or exercise? Getting plenty of sleep can also promote better health and vitality. Or walk around the office if you sit all day. Pledge to stand up once an hour or when you take a phone call.

Chill out more. Stress is the enemy to feeling better and being more productive. Stress management programs can provide the tips and support to manage those life situations that may anger, sadden, or worry you and help to keep you on goal.

Do something for someone else. Employees who are active and engaged in helping others in their community are often more productive and healthier than those who do not. If your company supports a special cause, or if you have one important to you, make the effort to spend a few hours a month volunteering or helping in some way.

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How to Throw a Party for Less Than \$50

When planning a party, it's easy to get caught up in the desire to impress with glitz and glitter and overspend. However, it is possible to throw a great party while staying within your budget. Here's some advice on throwing a fun, yet frugal, party your friends will remember.

Step 1: Pick your price. Ask yourself: "How much can I reasonably afford to spend on this party while still meeting my other financial obligations?" Set your limit and stick to it. Even if you only have \$50 to spend on your party, you can still throw a party that your guests will love.

Step 2: Consider the details. The "who, what, where, when, and why" of your party can have a major impact on your party budget. Make some cost-conscious choices, like inviting fewer guests, hosting the party at a free location such as your home, and holding the party at a time when serving appetizers instead of a full meal is appropriate.

Step 3: Budget for the big three. Food and drink, decorations, and entertainment are the three big-budget categories for any get-together. Decide how you want to allocate your party budget and look for creative ways to save in the other categories. Following are some ideas:

Food and drink

- Potlucks are a frugal way to feed your guests and get them involved. Particularly in the case of big celebrations, your family and friends will likely be happy to help contribute to the meal.
- Alcohol is a big budget breaker, ask guests to bring their own if they wish.
- Combine simple, inexpensive ingredients to create delicious dishes. Cheap Eats, MMI's free eBook, has plenty of frugal recipe ideas for your party.

Decorations

- Consider simple decorations that evoke more than one sense. Scented candles, for example, can help set the party ambiance.
- Get crafty by creating your own table settings. Thrifty Thanksgiving, a free eBook from MMI, offers instructions for decorating the adults' and kids' tables.

Entertainment

- Center your party around an event to provide all the entertainment you need without costing you much. Think sporting events, popular TV shows or movies, or a National Regifting Day regifting party.



About Money Management International

Money Management International (MMI) is a nonprofit, full-service credit-counseling agency, providing confidential financial guidance, financial education, counseling and debt management assistance to consumers since 1958. MMI helps consumers trim their expenses, develop a spending plan and repay debts. Counseling is available by appointment in branch offices and 24/7 by telephone and Internet. Services are available in English or Spanish. To learn more, call 800.432.7310 or visit www.MoneyManagement.org.