

- ☺ Be sure to allow yourself to feel whatever you feel. Keep in mind that it is normal to feel sad and lonely, especially at holiday time. Remember that it's OK to think about the past, but after you do, focus on the present.
- ☺ Encourage yourself to try to be the best you can be, and try not to set unrealistic expectations for yourself or others.
- ☺ Make a list of all that you have, and don't just include material things. Keep in mind the things money can't buy, like respect, caring, and friendships. It's OK to feel bad about what you don't have, but gently redirect yourself to focus on all you do have. If your list feels short, think harder!
- ☺ Spend some time doing something nice for yourself. Remember to treat yourself with kindness just as you would a holiday guest.
- ☺ Do your best to avoid situations that will result in drinking and drugging, overeating, and overspending. Remember: sobriety is an attitude.

For some people, the holidays can be a really hard time. If you know someone who doesn't look like they just have the blues, be sure to talk to them about how they are feeling. This goes for you, too: *if you're feeling really bad or having thoughts of suicide and are on center, go immediately to any staff person. Tell them what's going on, and you will get the help you need. If you're off center, tell someone how you are feeling or call 911.* Even if you're not feeling all that bad, but just want to talk about the holidays, the blues, or whatever, drop by the Health & Wellness Center to make a mental health appointment. We'll get in touch with you right away!

By keeping in mind the tips in this brochure, you'll be able to cope with the holiday blues, which sometimes can feel intense but usually don't last too long (for most of us, they last for a few hours to a few weeks before or just after the holiday, and disappear when we go back to our daily routines). However the holidays go for you, practice the self-care tips in this brochure to stay healthy. If you do, you'll be jetting your way to success!





Christmas! Kwanzaa! Hanukah! New Year's Eve! It's the holiday season, a time of joy and excitement for little kids and for those who are still young at heart. Eat! Drink!

Be Merry! Be Happy! Be Merry!



What's not to like about the holidays? Well, for one thing, not everyone is merry at this time of year. In fact, the holiday season can be one of the most difficult periods of the year for many people. Even for those whose lives are basically fine, it's still a time that we look at what and who we have and don't have, and remember years past. As we do, we have feelings about where our lives are at today and times that are past. Some of those feelings are good ones (like when we felt loved), and some are not so good (like when a relationship ended). We can have really strong feelings at holiday time when . . .

- ☹️ We remember those we have lost, and wish they were here with us today.
- ☹️ We want to give something special to a person we love, but don't have any money to do it with.
- ☹️ We wish we could have a happy family, but the reality is that the family is busted up by divorce, drugs, abuse, violence, or hard times.
- ☹️ We want to be with that special someone whom we've not yet found or who once was here but now is gone.

Together with changes in our daily routines, all of these wishes and memories can leave us sad, lonely, worn out, or frustrated. Just when we're supposed to be happy, our lives can feel turned upside down with what is often called the **holiday blues** (which can occur at any holiday or vacation time).



The most common symptoms associated with the **holiday blues** are:

- ☹️ Depression, with feelings of sadness and emptiness.
- ☹️ Anxiety, worry, and even agitation, especially about being alone, being broke, or what next year is going to bring.
- ☹️ Relapse into drinking and using drugs because of all the partying and how hard it is to be around drugs and the people we once used with.
- ☹️ Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep (or even sleeping too much).
- ☹️ Feeling overly guilty or worthless.
- ☹️ Difficulty thinking clearly or concentrating.
- ☹️ Not feeling interested in doing what usually brings us pleasure, such as being with friends, listening to music, or dancing.
- ☹️ Having physical symptoms not related to a cold, flu, or other illness, including headaches, stomach aches, and non-specific pains.

So, what should you do to cope with the holiday blues? Here are some ideas:

- ☺️ Don't forget to use the stress busters you already know:



- ☺️ Continue doing the regular exercise you have been doing.
- ☺️ Practice Controlled Breathing, and give meditation a try.
- ☺️ Keep a balance of activity and rest (you really *don't* have to stay up 'til 4 a.m. every night!).
- ☺️ Make sure you eat a healthy diet (yes, with lots of veggies and fruits!).
- ☺️ Talk to someone you can trust, and share your thoughts and feelings.

- ☺️ Spend some time doing something for someone else: the holidays are a great time to volunteer to help those who are struggling. In doing so, you will surely help yourself.

