



Holiday Depression

The holiday period from Thanksgiving through New Years Day can be a time of great joy and celebration. It can also be a time of stress, anger, fear, frustration, and disappointment. There are many causes of the “holiday blues” including stress, fatigue, separation from family, and financial concerns.

Commuting, shift work, undesirable days off, and the inability to get time off are circumstances that confront all our members to varying degrees

Unrealistic expectations of how the holiday should be (the perfect day), comparisons to past holidays, obsessing over “what if” or “if only”, dealing with the needs or desires of family members can also add to the holiday blues.

Physical signs of stress are rapid heartbeat, headache, stiff neck and/or tight shoulders, backache, rapid breathing, sweaty palms, upset stomach, nausea, or diarrhea. Mental signs can include irritability, intolerance of minor disturbances, irritation or frustration, loss of temper more often, yelling at others for no reason, feeling jumpy or exhausted all the time, difficulty focusing on tasks, worrying too much about insignificant things.

Another possible cause of the “Holiday Blues” may be Seasonal Affective Disorder. SAD is a type of depression that comes and goes with the seasons, typically starting in the late fall / early winter and going away in the spring / summer. SAD is not considered as a separate disorder; it is a type of depression displaying a recurring seasonal pattern. The symptoms are similar to non-seasonal depression, but they are linked to reduced exposure to sunlight. While in many parts of the country it may not get cold and dreary for long periods of time, however, in more temperate climates, the days get shorter and people find themselves going to work and coming home in the dark.

Symptoms of SAD include:

- Low Energy
- Hypersomnia (excessive daytime sleepiness)
- Overeating
- Weight Gain
- Craving for carbohydrates
- Social withdrawal

Some helpful strategies may include:

- Get outside during the daytime as much as possible, even in the cold.
- Open window blinds and drapes
- Sit near windows
- Exercise in the sunlight.

The four major types of treatment for Seasonal Affect Disorder:

- Medication
- Light therapy
- Psychotherapy
- Vitamin D

If you think you or a fellow member may be affected by SAD see your doctor or a mental health professional.

To end this article on a positive, note the following are some suggestions for keeping the holidays a happy and joyous time:

Keep expectations realistic for your personal situation. (It's ok if everything isn't perfect)
Set manageable goals
Pace yourself
Organize your time
Be realistic about what you can and cannot do
Set reasonable spending limits
Do not expect the holidays to fix personal problems that existed before
Avoid overindulgence of alcohol
Remember the spirit of the holidays
Enjoy the simple pleasures, spend time with your pets, hobbies you enjoy, people who make you laugh.
Do something nice for someone and/or help someone less fortunate than yourself

For help with this or any personal problem from substance abuse to family matters, contact your EAP Coordinator.

For information, Contact your local IAM/EAP Coordinator,
or you may contact
DL 142 EAP Director Paul Shultz at: 704-907-3563 cell or pm.shultz@att.net

***Someone you know is preparing for their first Christmas without their
Husband, wife, mother, father, brother, sister, daughter or son.
Others are preparing for their last...
Regardless of the specifics, remember that this season of joy is often
many times a season of sorrow for many.
Be kind, be generous, give love, give help; if nothing else,
Just don't give people a hard time.***