

Holidays

15 Holiday Tips to Help You Get Through Grief By Tyler Woods

The holidays are upon us and many people who have suffered a loss are likely to greet family celebrations and special events with feelings of sadness, depression and grief. This is a normal feeling. Here are some suggestions to help you and your family get through the holidays during your time of grief and loss.

1. Hang a stocking for your loved one in which people can put notes with their thoughts or feelings.
2. Do something for others: Volunteer at a soup kitchen; ask someone who is alone to share the day with your family; provide help for a needy family.
3. Recognize that holidays won't be the same. If you try to keep everything as it was, you'll be sorrowful. Family get-togethers may be difficult. Be honest with each other about your feelings.
4. Talk with your family and decide what you want to do for the holiday season and try not to set expectations too high for yourself or the day. Don't expect things to be the same, you are going to be disappointed. Do things a little differently.
5. Donate a gift or money in your loved one's name.
6. Plan ahead. Always plan ahead for the holiday. Know that from time to time, you might be sad, and plan for moments that you can share with yourself, family, and your support team. Give yourself some space so that you can more easily respond to the wisdom of your body, mind and spirit.
7. Do the things that are very special and important to you then do the best that you can. Emotionally and physically holidays can be draining. Try to get enough rest.
8. Remember to honor your personal sense of how best to handle these occasions. Talking with a trusted family member or friend can help you clarify your thoughts and feelings.
9. If you belong to a support group, share what you are feeling and don't be afraid to socialize with your group members. If you see a therapist, ask for an extra appointment during this time.
10. Recognize the fact that as a grieving person you have definite limitations and are unable to function as you normally would. Try to re-evaluate priorities and decide which activities you really feel up to participating in. Keep it simple.
11. Holiday gatherings may be more than you can deal with. If you don't feel you can endure such gatherings, let someone who seems understanding know ahead of time that you will not be attending or that you may not be able to stay very long because of the pain associated with the gathering. This may eliminate awkward (possibly tearful) explanations later to those who are not understanding.
12. Daily lists made out the night before or in the morning may prove very helpful. Lack of concentration is part of grief; lists help us remember things.

13. Do worst jobs first.

14. Allow for private time for yourself and others during the holidays. Knowing that you've planned an hour of quiet for this afternoon or some other set time may alleviate some of the stress that may amplify your loss when frustrations arise. Remember tears relieve stress. A few tears shed in private may prevent painful unexpected public tears during moments of frustration.

15. Make a new tradition

The Cause of Holiday Blues By Tyler Woods

Okay let's set the typical scene for the holidays. The house is decorated with strings of lights and the latest outdoor icicles. Your kitchen has become a shrine to Martha Stewart, and your bathroom scales have been accidentally misplaced for the next month. This year is "special" so you go out of your way and get a Spruce tree, and of course you need new tree decorations for such a beautiful tree. The shopping malls are packed, and you have maxed all four of your credit cards. You are going to Grandmother Rose's for Christmas who cooks the driest turkey that you have ever experienced. Uncle George, who drinks too much and gets way too loud will be there with his wife who complains about her latest ailment while the kids are fighting over the toys and your mother does not like the outfit you are wearing.

Ahhhh yes and we wonder why millions of people experience what is known as the holiday blues. The holiday blues is temporary and seasonal and can be difficult for many people especially those suffering a loss. Emotions and financial distress repressed during other months often tend to surface during the holidays. Symptoms for the "Holiday Blues" include, an empty feeling, sadness, anxiety, lack of energy, crying, loss of interest or pleasure, sleep problems, weight gain or loss, aches and pains that just simply do not go away, feelings of guilt and worthlessness, difficulty with concentrating, remembering, or making decisions. The principal reason for holiday blues is based on unrealistic expectations. The media presents us with the perfect holiday images of family, friends, food, and gifts. What many fail to see is that these are only fabricated scenes. Additional reasons for holiday blues can include increased stress, inability to be with family or get along with family, memories of past holidays, remembering the death of a loved one, change in diet, change in daily routine, and overspending. There are ways you can decrease your chance for the holiday blues.

- ☪ • Don't over spend! Know your budget and plan ahead of time. Never go in debt for the holiday. The bills will haunt you till the next holiday season!
- ☪ • Don't buy into the media's representation of what the holidays are. Holidays are what YOU MAKE THEM!
- ☪ • Let go of the past traditions and create new and different ways to celebrate.

- ☯ • Organize your time. You do not have to go to every Christmas party and sale. Be realistic about managing your time.
- ☯ • Don't judge yourself or others by the value of a gift. If you give from the heart your gift will not be too small.
- ☯ • Allow yourself to feel sad or lonely. These are normal feelings especially at holiday times.
- ☯ • Be realistic! If you don't get along with your family don't expect to get along with them for the holidays. Remember, you're family is a real family, not some TV family. If your mother/father has always criticized you, they still will you can count on it, however, you don't have to ruin your holiday. You are not in control of other people's actions, but you can be in control your reaction to them.
- ☯ • Most important is to make Christmas an occasion and not a material event!

By taking care of you emotions you can take better care of your health. Remember to get plenty of rest and exercise and eat properly to help increase better health during this hectic time.

Expect to have Yourself a Healthy Holiday

By Tyler Woods

I always thought that instead of saying happy holidays, we should say healthy holidays. This is because during the holiday season, people tend to become ill much more, stress levels increase, suicide rates triple and depression strike twice as many people. So what's up with holidays and poor physical and mental health?

The dilemma about holidays could well be expectations. Many people expect to have a good holiday and why not? Look at our sayings; Happy holiday, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, peace on earth and good will to man. We live in a society that EXPECTS happiness during the season. Stores are crowded, people are spending money they don't have, traffic is bumper to bumper, there is never enough time, and family disputes abound. These obstacles do not go away just because it is the holidays.

So what can you do to change your outlook and have a healthier happier holiday? Throw away your expectations and ring in the holiday with acceptance!

By accepting the fact that holidays carry a degree of stress and frustration you might decrease your stress levels and increase your health. It is well documented that with high stress our immune system breaks down and causes illness. Good mental health is the key to good physical health, and good physical health is the

key to good mental health. Both works hand in hand in creating balanced health. There are healthy ways to rid your expectations.

- ☯ • Expect traffic will slow and congested and allow more time for travel. Listen to music while driving or take along with you an audio book on tape or CD to help ease your traffic frustrations.
- ☯ • Consider using your computer for your shopping pleasure and avoid crowded streets and stores. This way those long lines in the malls that you expect to see are a sure thing of the past. This could also reduce chances of catching cold or flu.
- ☯ • Never expect to find the perfect gift for someone. Think about giving healthy gifts instead such as gift certificates for reflexology, yoga or meditation classes, massages or a spa treatment. Gift certificates are also available for health food stores as well.
- ☯ • Do not feel obligated to do anything you do not want to do. Because people expect you to cook for twenty people doesn't mean you have to. Or, because you are expected to show up at all the holiday gatherings, does not mean you have to. Remember that everything you do is about choice, not because you have to, but because you make a choice to.
- ☯ • Do not make new years resolutions! 90% of resolutions made are never fulfilled. Set minor goals that are easily achievable. When we put a high expectation on ourselves, we set ourselves up for failure.
- ☯ • Get plenty of rest and take extra vitamin B and C. Vitamin B helps reduce stress and vitamin C helps build the immune system and can prevent you from catching that winter cold or flu.
- ☯ • Finally give the gift that keeps on giving. By loving yourself and accepting who you are and reducing your expectations, you can guarantee yourself and healthy holiday.