

# Simple Steps to Beat the Holiday Blues

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## **DON'T RESOLVE FAMILY CONFLICTS**

Have realistic expectations of what you want to accomplish. Holidays gatherings are typically not the best time to fix a relationship, especially if there is alcohol involved. Be cordial to people that you don't particularly care for, and resist the temptation to come up with passive-aggressive jabs. If you are trying to improve a relationship, establish a basic dialogue and build on it after the holidays.

## **LIMIT ALCOHOL INTAKE**

Alcohol is a depressant, and if you're already feeling down, it will only – at best – offer a temporary solution. It can also worsen your depression, and bring out feelings of anger and irritability. We also more likely to say things, especially to a family member, that we may later regret. If you crave a festive mood, stick to 1-2 drinks, or better yet, try drinking a non-alcoholic beverage, such as coffee, hot apple cider, or hot cocoa. No one will be able to tell the difference.



## **VOLUNTEER**

If your holidays are a lonely affair, chances are that you may spend quite a bit of time lamenting life and feeling sorry for yourself. The trick? Redirect the focus away from yourself and onto somebody else in need. Volunteering is a wonderful way to contribute

for example, hosts free holiday dinners organized at the George R. Brown Convention Center every Thanksgiving and Christmas and they always need volunteers. Most midsized-to larger cities have similar opportunities, while smaller towns may have other options, like food banks. Other alternatives – adopt a needy family, adopt a pet from a local shelter, or drop off unopened toys at your local fire station.

## **TRY HOLIDAY CRAFTS AND BE CREATIVE**

If the thought of a gift-buying extravaganza fills you with anxiety, consider making handmade gifts. Create a painting, a fruit basket, and/or arts and crafts - the possibilities are endless, and people will be touched when they receive something that can't be bought. Be as creative as you want, even if you do it for your own sake and keep it as your own masterpiece.

## **LOOK FOR FUN LOW COST/FREE ACTIVITIES**

Holidays can be expensive, but they don't have to be. Many activities are free or cheap, such as watching Christmas lights in the neighborhood, attending an art exhibit, window shopping, or enjoying nature in a free park. Try to balance your time between indoors and outdoors, in order get some variety.

## **BE SOCIABLE**

If you already have friends – call them! If you don't, find some! It's not actually as complicated as it sounds. In this internet age, there are plenty of opportunities to find people who interest you, activities to participate in, and opportunities to meet other people. You may not find your best friend (but then again, you may, if you're lucky), but you sure will find company. For example, at Meetup.com you'll find tons of groups meeting on a regular basis. Find something that interests you and go for it!

### **FIND YOUR INNER ELF**

A little mischief doesn't hurt anyone – at least not too much! The goal is not to hurt anyone or do anything illegal, but to be a little bit more authentic and take calculated risks. Do you care too much about what other people think of you? Do you worry about looking silly? Does the thought of doing something differently scare you? Good, because this is a perfect opportunity to push your limits. Wear a funny holiday-themed hat or costume while running errands; go to a thrift store and find an ugly Christmas sweater to wear at the office, or even break into song and sing carols to your next-door neighbors. Even Santa's helpers took a little break every now and then, and just played around. Why not you? Take things beyond your normal routine and be slightly different!

### **SHOW GRATITUDE**

Appreciate what you have. It's tempting to believe that everyone is having a fabulous, warm, and cozy time with their family during the holidays, but reality says otherwise. Drunken fights, feuding in-laws, and stressed-out spouses - this paints a more realistic depiction of the holidays. It just looks like everyone is having a good time, because they are posing for a picture-perfect post on social media to make everyone else jealous. And even if some of them are having a fabulous holiday, they are now paying the price by having a terrible hangover or a couple of extra dollars of credit card debt. So don't worry – if your holidays are devoid of the optimal cheer, you are probably not as bad off as you think. Appreciate the friend or family connections you do have, and count your blessings.

### **HAPPY HOLIDAYS, EVERYONE!**