



the MIND reader

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Top 10 Common Causes of the Holiday Blues

By: Julie Kostrey

The holiday blues plagues about one-in-five Americans each year. The following are among the top 10 common causes:

10 - Time change — With the change in time, approximately one-third of people who have experienced a major depressive disorder will experience worsening of their symptoms during the winter. Even people without full-fledged depressive disorders often report decreased energy, sadness, sleep disturbance, and decrease in interest or pleasure in activities. Getting out in the morning light and spending time outside can be quite beneficial.

9 - Lack of time for oneself — A major focus of the holidays is providing things for others and/or looking after them. We frequently neglect ourselves during this time. This externalization of efforts can deplete your reserves and worsen your anxiety or depression. Practice self-care and look out for yourself during the holiday period. The holidays are a wonderful period to reflect, reassess, and make plans for the future.

8 - Lack of planning — It is common to see people running around malls or stores at the last minute because they delayed purchasing gifts. This adds a great deal of stress and contributes to holiday blues. Organize yourself and plan ahead.

7 - Overscheduling — There is sometimes a desire to meet with as many people as possible that we have not been able to see during the year. This results in a packed schedule. Frequently, we will feel rushed and burdened by the need to interact with so many over such a short period. Don't overbook yourself. Try to limit the number of interactions and think carefully about who you wish to meet.

6 - Lack of sleep — It is common for people to spend more time celebrating, meeting people and going out. Unfortunately, decreased sleep is a major contributor to feeling tired and lethargic during the day, and may contribute to increased rates of depressive symptoms. It is important during the holiday period to try to develop healthier sleep habits.

5 - Overeating — Obesity is a major American problem. During the holidays, there is a tendency for all of us to eat too much, which can lead us to feel worse about our body image and ourselves. Eat in moderation. (continued on page 4)



Top 10 Misconceptions that My 2-Year-Old Has about Christmas

By: Lindsay Simoneo

Things NOT to do on Christmas Eve, according to a 7-Year-Old

By: Brandon & Luke Dixon

10. Run out of milk.
9. Burn the cookies.
8. Open your presents.
7. Stay up too late.
6. Forget your hiding place.
5. Leave the fire burning in the fireplace.
4. Forget to secure your stockings.
3. Mistake wrapping paper for toilet paper.
2. Drink the eggnog by yourself.
1. Forget to pray forgiveness.

10. Glass Ball Ornaments work the same as soccer balls. This was a hard lesson to learn, but it only took one shattered ornament and lots of tears to learn it. We still talk about the fallen ornament when we light the tree.
 9. The tree needs to be lit all the time, or else Christmas is canceled. This one is still a battle, as every time I turn off the tree my son cries with the belief that I alone canceled Christmas everywhere. Teaching a kiddo that the tree needs to be turned off so it can rest has had no effect. To my son, the world and Santa will only know it is Christmas if the LIGHTS are ON! The Star on the tree is clearly our tracker beacon. Duh!!
 8. If it snows, it's Christmas. This one is very sad, because Wyoming has the potential to snow in August. Because of that we have had to increase our calendar teachings and how days/months work.
 7. Santa visits casually, just like Grandma. Starting in August my son began to ask to go visit Santa. When I informed him that Santa won't visit for a few more months, and only during the month of December, devastation ensued. "But, my Santa loves me." Yes, yes he does.
 6. Santa IS Grandpa. Nope, also not true. My son's love for Santa is so big that he assumes he is literally part of our family. And to be fair to him, who ELSE would love him enough to give him random gifts. Again, his answer for this is "But my Santa loves me". Still true, little dude.
 5. Baby Jesus is a Superhero. This has been the most fun misconception. Our son has a little people nativity, but also has little people superhero action figures. Because of this, new superhero canons and theological stories have been created. It is now the standard that Batman, Superman, and Green Lantern were the wise men. It is also the new norm for baby Jesus to fight crime with them after his birthday is over.
 4. Christmas involves a Superhero Party. This I think is related to #5. Either way, my son is convinced on Christmas that he has to wear his batman costume for Jesus' birthday. And that we will do so as well. And we will spend the rest of Christmas fighting crime.
 3. We go to Church every day. To be fair, church is crazy fun right now. Last week he went to Sunday school and had a fun morning, and then got to go back that night to dress up like a Shepard, eating cookies, and making snacks. Clearly, if Church is this awesome, we have to do it every day.
 2. The Grinch is going to steal our Christmas. Oh man, look out! The Superheroes and Baby Jesus have to fight someone, and they have found their nemesis. Currently there are great concerns over who is coming down the Chimney and if anyone suspicious has been looking at our tree. He has accused our dog of working for the Grinch and has demanded she swears her alliance to the superheroes. Our dog Lucy was happy to comply.
 1. Christmas is TODAY. This is the cutest and most constant one. Again this goes back to our lack of concept of time. Even with an advent calendar, our son still hopes he will wake up and that Christmas is TODAY. Even though there is an explanation every morning that ends in disappointment and snuggles (a lot of cute snuggles) and lots of discussions about the adventures of baby Jesus and Batman. I am sad Luke left that out when he wrote the story down. ;)
- I hope Christmas will be as cute for you and your family. May you smile, laugh, snuggle, and enjoy for family as we enjoy ours.

Top 10 Christmas Movies... According to Mark.

By: Mark Russell

10. Babes in Toyland (both the 1961 and 1986 versions)
 9. White Christmas (or Holiday Inn for essentially the same movie)
 8. The Santa Clause (Tim Allen in a fat suit, priceless)
 7. It's a Wonderful Life (I actually just saw this last year)
 6. Santa Claus: The Movie (Dudley Moore as an inventive elf, need I say more?)
 5. Muppet Christmas Carol (Muppets + Michael Caine = unstoppable)
 4. How The Grinch Stole Christmas (animated, sorry Jim Carrey)
 3. Elf ("The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear")
 2. Home alone 1 & 2 (but not 3...blegh)
 1. A Christmas Story (because 24 hours of this movie on TBS is still not enough!)
- Honorable mention: Die Hard, Nightmare Before Christmas



10 Gift Wrapping Tips and Techniques.

By: Kristen Cooper

Wrapping presents: Some people hate it, some people are Martha Stewart-Pinterest loving-wrapping geniuses! For those of you that are creatively challenged here are some suggestions...

1. Start wrapping early—Avoid a gift wrapping time crunch and start wrapping gifts as you buy them!
2. Organize your wrapping supplies – Keeping your wrapping supplies all in one place will save you time and keep you from spending money on wrapping supplies you may already have. Store your gift bags, tissue, wrapping paper, etc in a single bin.
3. Color Code—Assign each family member with a different colored (or themed) paper, no gift tags needed. This is a fun way for everyone to identify his or her presents.
4. Wrap on a hard surface – It may be easier to plop on the carpet in front of the TV, but lack of hard surface could cause wrinkles in your paper, making your wrapping look sloppy.
5. Ribbons & Bows – Tie a ribbon around a plain, unwrapped box for a simple, elegant look.
6. Or Ditch the Ribbon – Twine, fabric scraps or even decorative tape can be used to spruce up a package.
7. Go Green – Be creative and repurpose items around the house as gift wrap. Fabric scraps (old bedding and clothes), newspaper, brown grocery bags, kids artwork can replace wrapping paper. Both budget and environmentally friendly.
8. Out of gift bags? – Gift bags work best for those odd shaped gifts. Out? Dress up a brown lunch bag! Embellishments are endless: stickers, stamps, ribbons, or silk flower scraps.
9. Go Super Lazy – In a recent shopping excursion with Mind Spa's Lindsay Simineo, she shared the following as her go-to wrapping method "Just put it in a Ziploc container and throw a bow on it!"
10. Recycle gift wrap – After the holidays, don't toss away the wrapping and ribbons. Instead, run them through a shredder and use as stuffing for gifts.(2)



Top 10 ways to select a white elephant gift for your next Christmas party gift exchange

By: Sheri Fluellen

10. Find the cheapest neon-colored item in the clearance section at Target.
9. Buy a \$5 piece of stretched canvas at local craft store (i.e. Michaels) and go to town painting or spray painting it with whatever colors you happen to have in your paint cabinet. Be careful though, cause you may actually end up with an awesome piece of artwork!
8. Grab some cans of dented food from your grocery store's "dented and discounted" shelf.
7. Go to your random junk closet (especially if you have a place where you have hid, er, I mean stashed decorative items that are not really your "style". Perfect place to identify an item that really doesn't belong in your house anymore.
6. Go dumpster diving behind your local dollar store.
5. Find a monogrammed purse, bag, or portfolio at a thrift store. What better gift than a personalized one, but personalized for the wrong person!
4. Wrap up your Halloween outfit if you don't intend to wear it again.
3. Shop the Free Stuff groups on Facebook and find a post where no one has commented yet. Should be a slam dunk!
2. Hit up your local Goodwill to find a treasure trove of gold nuggets that others haven't wanted. Best items are often at the bottom of bins (which means they may have been hiding there for months!!)
1. Re-gift the last white elephant gift you or your significant other received!



Top 10 things to NOT do during Christmas at your in-laws.

By: Sheri Fluellen

10. Don't make mention of anyone's weight, period. This puts you in murky waters. Even if you comment someone is losing weight, you imply they were fat before. (Note, this is a good rule of thumb for any occasion)
9. Don't forget anyone's gifts. Especially if it is your spouse's gift. They will not look upon you kindly for showing disrespect to their family member and you will have a lot of "making up" to do over a long period of time.
8. Don't take long showers and use up the hot water. This doesn't show respect for time, money or for others who may come after you.
7. Don't buy your father-in-law socks and underwear as his Christmas gift.
6. Don't buy your mother-in-law socks and underwear as her Christmas gift.
5. Don't bring over anything that could be dangerous to anyone! You do not want to be deep fat frying a turkey and accidentally catch their house on fire or decide to finally make use of that bacon that's been in the fridge for about 2 months for bacon wrapped weenies.
4. Don't be brutally honest with your in-laws about their cooking unless you're related to Chef Gordon Ramsey (in which case you won't have any bad vittles on the table).
3. Don't let your flatulence go at the dinner table and then try to pass it off on the baby cousin.
2. Don't agree to go "hunting" with your inlaws after Christmas dinner if things have not gone well up to this point. This could be a bad omen.
1. Don't complain about where you end up having to sleep, and definitely don't comment that the bed (or whatever material you sleep on) isn't bouncy enough.



The Top 10 Most Common Causes of the Holiday Blues (Cont)

4 - Lack of exercise — Because of frequent rain, people often exercise less during the holidays. Exercise is a known preventive activity for depressive symptoms, and decreasing the amount of a regular exercise can worsen symptoms. Keep up your workout routine.

3 - Increased alcohol use — It is common during the holiday period for people to celebrate. Unfortunately, a certain percentage may drink too much. Alcoholism is also a disorder that commonly occurs with depression. Limit your drinking and remember that it is okay if you don't feel festive. Accept your inner experience and do not force yourself to express specific feelings.

2 - Unrealistic expectations about ourselves — During the holidays, we frequently meet other people that are quite successful and are advancing throughout their careers. This may lead us to place unrealistic expectations on ourselves concerning our own accomplishments, or our perceived lack of them. None of us is perfect, and sometimes we develop unrealistic expectations over the holidays of what we should accomplish and focus our failures. Be realistic in what you seek to achieve, both personally and professionally. Don't label the holidays as a time to cure all past

problems. The holidays do not prevent sadness or loneliness.

1 - Unrealistic fantasies about our families — Frequently during the holiday season, we will see movies that picture "the wonderful life," exemplified by "perfect" families. Unrealistic expectations that one's own family should meet these high standards can be quite depressing. Try to be realistic and emphasize your family's strengths rather than weaknesses.

Don't label the holidays as a time to cure all past problems. The holidays do not prevent sadness or loneliness. If you have recently experienced a **tragedy, death, or romantic break-up**, tell those close to you about your needs or seek support from a professional. This year, mind these top 10 reasons for the holiday blues, and do your part to stay safe and healthy, as well as have fun! Happy Holidays! (1)



Top 10 Holiday Activities

By: Doug Blocksma

1. **Shopping.** Just enjoy it, get something new and shiny and know that you are loved.
2. **Board Games.** This also includes the use of Egg Nog (responsibly).
3. **Christmas Movies.** You can't ever be 12 again, but you *can* watch Home Alone for the millionth time.
4. **Holiday Feasts.** Enjoy the roast beast in the Who-Village, and don't forget to hold hands in a circle and sing a song first.
5. **Christmas Eve Services.** If you don't take a moment to be quiet, thankful and reflective this season, then you might be missing an important part.
6. **Egg Nog.** Yes, this deserves a bullet point.
7. **Awkward Family Interactions.** No, you haven't spoken to your Aunt since the previous Christmas. Yes, she tells you the same jokes. No, you cannot avoid this. Yes, you are a good niece/nephew for hugging her before you leave.
8. **Decorations.** I don't care how much you don't care about tinsel and garland; there is something magical and breathless about a lit tree in the early morning before the sun comes up.
9. **Sleeping.** We don't do this enough – see also: spending multiple days in pajamas.
10. **Gift-Giving.** While not a birth-right, giving and receiving gifts should remind us that we are beloved, undeserving and a participant in the kingdom. Be a good gift-giver this Christmas, even if the gift isn't wrapped and comes in the form of wintry driving, intentional time and shared moments. Tis' the season.

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