

Holiday Blues

by Dana Anderson, MFT |

Holiday Blues refers to depression that occurs during the Holiday season, usually from Thanksgiving and into the New Year. Generally, holidays are a time when we come together with our families and friends to celebrate each other and the occasion. For many, it can be the only time of the year that allows for family visiting and this can be joyful. For others, it can be a very difficult time that brings up issues of separation and loneliness, grief, trauma, and confusion.

Separation can be that feeling of being on the outside looking in, but somehow unable to be a part of the group. During the holidays, there is music and apparent and commercial joy everywhere, yet you don't feel like participating. Or you are truly alone, orphaned by circumstances. Whatever the case may be, feelings of loneliness can be greatly enhanced during the holiday season.

The holidays also bring up grief. While we may be celebrating and joining with our current loved ones, we are reminded of those who have passed on. This can be particularly difficult for those who have lost someone in the past year, making it the first holiday without them. For most, celebrating these firsts can be bittersweet.

These occasions can also trigger sadness and anxiety from years past. There are many who grew up as children of divorce. Although children adapt and their resiliency celebrates the positives—"Santa comes to both houses, twice the presents, etc." for many, their holiday involves two homes, mom's in the morning and dad's in the afternoon, making the holidays chaotic. Arrangements and schedules can add burden to all involved, causing stress, anxiety, and grief in children. Adult children of divorce can still have the wounds, and unless resolved, continue to live with them.

There are many who grew up suffering trauma during the holidays and alcohol can be a major factor. You may know someone who hates the holidays but cannot explain why. With a little questioning you learn that there was always some big battle at the dinner table when someone was intoxicated and things got

loud or violent. The emotional or physical trauma is carried on often with no awareness of it.

The holidays can make us feel anxious especially during challenging economic times. “How can I justify spending this money when I can barely pay my mortgage?” With families struggling to survive, difficult choices come up. There may be confusion around expectations...who to buy gifts for...what to buy....how with no money, etc. For parents who are struggling and want to give their children a special holiday, be creative. This year make your gifts, write a letter, go for a walk, give your time to family and be of service to the community. One sure way to snap out of the blues is to help others, because you stop thinking about your problems and yourself. These times are calling us to live more simply. There is a blessing in this. It may seem cliché yet it is true. The gifts we treasure most are less tangible. Spending time, showing up, going to an event, going for a hike, and being of services to others; all of these things are ways to cope with the blues.

There is no need to add undue stress during the holidays, the frenzy of activity is already enough. Another tip to help you through if you are feeling blue, do not feel you have to be around toxic people just because you have in the past, grieve the loss and replace it with a healthy choice. Practicing kindness and compassion to yourself and others are the gifts that keep on giving, especially since someone around you may be quietly experiencing holiday blues.

Many blessings, Dana Anderson MFT

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