

HOLIDAY DEPRESSION AND STRESS

The holiday season is a time full of joy, cheer, parties, and family gatherings. However, for many people, it is a time of self-evaluation, loneliness, reflection on past failures, and anxiety about an uncertain future.



What Causes Holiday Blues?

Many factors can cause the “holiday blues”: stress, fatigue, unrealistic expectations, over-commercialization, financial constraints, and the inability to be with one’s family and friends. The demands of shopping, parties, family reunions, and house guests also contribute to feelings of tension. People who do not become depressed may develop other stress responses, such as: headaches, excessive drinking, over-eating, and difficulty sleeping. Even more people experience post-holiday let down after January 1. This can result from disappointments during the preceding months compounded with the excess fatigue and stress.

Coping with Stress and Depression During the Holidays

- **Keep expectations for the holiday season manageable.** Try to set realistic goals for yourself. Pace yourself. Organize your time. Make a list and prioritize the important activities. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. Do not put entire focus on just one day (i.e., Thanksgiving Day) remember it is a season of holiday sentiment and activities can be spread out (time-wise) to lessen stress and increase enjoyment.
- **Remember the holiday season does not banish reasons for feeling sad or lonely;** there is room for these feelings to be present, even if the person chooses not to express them.
- **Leave “yesteryear” in the past and look toward the future.** Life brings changes. Each season is different and can be enjoyed in its own way. Don’t set yourself up in comparing today with the “good ol’ days.”
- **Do something for someone else.** Try volunteering some time to help others.
- **Enjoy activities that are free, such as driving around to look at holiday decorations;** going window shopping without buying; making a snowperson with children.
- **Be aware that excessive drinking will only increase your feelings of depression.**
- **Try something new.** Celebrate the holidays in a new way.
- **Spend time with supportive and caring people.** Reach out and make new friends or contact someone you have not heard from for awhile.
- **Save time for yourself!** Recharge your batteries! Let others share responsibility of activities.

Can Environment Be a Factor?

Recent studies show that some people suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD) which results from fewer hours of sunlight as the days grow shorter during the winter months. Phototherapy, a treatment involving a few hours of exposure to intense light, is effective in relieving depressive symptoms in patients with SAD.

Other studies on the benefits of phototherapy found that exposure to early morning sunlight was effective in relieving seasonal depression. Recent findings, however, suggest that patients respond equally well to phototherapy whether it is scheduled in the early afternoon. This has practical applications for antidepressant treatment since it allows the use of phototherapy in the workplace as well as the home.

source: National Mental Health Association (NMHA) ©2019

HOW TO LOWER YOUR FINANCIAL STRESS



Money worries are among the most common sources of personal and family stress, according to Consumer Federation of America (CFA).

Living with too much of any kind of pressure on a daily basis can take an emotional and physical toll, contributing to sleepless nights, backaches or headaches or, over time, even life-threatening diseases, such as high blood pressure or heart disease.

Whether your credit card balances are soaring, or you and your partner are arguing constantly over nickels and dimes, there are things you can do to relieve financial stress.

Take a breather

The CFA suggests taking these steps to ease money-related stress:

- Focus on what you have, not on how much you're lacking. List all your possessions, including material things, your health and your relationships.
- Eliminate clutter in your life. Tossing out what you don't need and organizing the rest also can tidy up your emotions. So can meditating or sharing your feelings with a nonjudgmental person.
- Take care of yourself physically. Exercise is one of the best stress reducers. Eat a balanced, healthy diet.

Talk it out

If conflicts with your significant other over money matters are a primary source of stress, talk it over honestly and openly. Write down your short- and long-term financial goals to learn where the two of you can focus your discussions. Put your relationship first, while nurturing each other's needs. Compromise, if necessary.

Take action

Exercise, positive thoughts and conversation may help in the short term, but if you aren't fixing the cause of your money worries, the stress will bounce right back into your life. You need to take action if the money coming in is less than the money going out; if you're able to make only minimum payments on your credit cards; or you're relying on plastic for essentials, such as food or rent.

To improve your financial health, the CFA suggests:

- Set up a budget. Write down where all your money is going -- mortgage and car payments, food, gas, telephone, clothing. Then, see what can be adjusted so you can live within your means. Create a new spending plan and stick with it. If there's nothing left to trim from your budget, you may need to think about new income sources.
- Stop taking on new debt, immediately. If this means not eating out, not indulging in expensive entertainment or giving up a second car and taking public transportation, then so be it. Learn if you qualify for public or private financial assistance. Use low-interest savings to pay down high-interest debt. Debt can be very expensive to carry; once it's paid off, your payments can go to savings instead.



- Get in touch with any creditors. If you can't pay what they want, explain your situation and ask about setting up an acceptable payment schedule. They may be willing to work with you. Stopping the nagging phone calls from creditors can significantly ease stress.
- Get help, if necessary. Be wary of for-profit or non-credentialed counseling organizations, especially if they ask for a large advance payment.



A safer bet is the National Foundation for Credit Counseling Service (NFCC). For little or no cost, an NFCC counselor can help you develop a budget and a plan for addressing your total financial situation. Visit the NFCC Web site and click on "getting help."

It is possible to get out of debt, though doing so may require new ways of thinking and acting. But as soon as you start taking decisive steps, you should feel the financial stress start to ease.

source: The StayWell Company, LLC ©2019

HEALTHY CHANGES FOR STAYING YOUNG



Time takes its toll on a body, but you don't have to sit back and let the effects of aging take place without a fight.

"You have the power to control how much and how fast the aging process works on your body. You can even reverse some of the damage that has already been done," says Tom Monte, author of "Staying Young: How To Prevent, Slow or Reverse More than 60 Signs of Aging."

The aging process is caused by oxidation, the breakdown of cells and tissues as they mingle with oxygen. "It's just like the rust in a car," Mr. Monte says.

You can fight that process by adopting healthful lifestyle habits that:

- Help your immune system fight disease.
- Build up reserves of lean muscle mass.
- Prevent or slow degenerative changes.
- Rebuild damaged tissue and restore lost function.

Help yourself

Anti-aging strategies can add to the quality of your life and health no matter how old you are, Mr. Monte says. Studies have found people in their 40s, 50s and 60s who start strength-training programs gain increased protection from injury.

Here are Mr. Monte's top 12 strategies for staying younger, longer:

- ☑ Don't smoke. Each puff hastens aging's degenerative processes. Plus, smoking lowers your aerobic capacity, making it harder for you to do the things you enjoy and making you feel old before your time.
- ☑ Eat foods rich in antioxidants. Vitamins A, C and E fight free-radical formation, the oxidation process that damages tissues. Eating 5 ½ cups of fruits and vegetables daily will help you get enough of these vitamins. Among the best sources are broccoli, cauliflower, red peppers and other red, yellow and green vegetables.
- ☑ Eat lots of fiber. Dietary fiber found in beans, broccoli, bran and other complex carbohydrates helps lower cholesterol, aids digestion and defends against some kinds of cancers.
- ☑ Maintain healthful cholesterol levels. Keep your total cholesterol level low (under 200) and your percentage of protective HDL cholesterol high. Following a diet that limits your fat intake to 30 percent or less of your total calories will help. Maintaining a healthful weight also is beneficial.
- ☑ Exercise regularly. Age robs you of aerobic capacity. Performing 30 minutes of moderate activity three to four times a week can help you retain your capacity.
- ☑ Build strength. As you age, your body's ratio of lean muscle mass to fat decreases (as we age, we lose muscle mass); this weighs you down and reduces your ability to burn calories efficiently. Regular strength training can help reverse this trend.
- ☑ Be flexible. Tight muscles limit your range of motion and increase your injury risk. A daily stretching routine that works each of your major muscle groups will help you stay supple.
- ☑ Get enough sleep. While you rest, your body uses the nutrients you've consumed that day to repair the damage done by the day's activities. Not getting enough sleep keeps your immune system from doing its job and keeps your body in a state of disrepair.
- ☑ Take care of your back. Keep muscles that support the spine strong and supple with cardiovascular and flexibility exercises. Use good body mechanics while lifting, standing or sitting for long periods of time.
- ☑ Deal with stress. Stress is linked to many diseases and degenerative conditions associated with aging. Learn to look at problems as challenges and accept situations you can't change.
- ☑ Stay close to your friends and family. A circle of support helps you deal with problems better, feel healthier and live longer.
- ☑ Be nice. There's a relationship between hostility, heart disease and other stress-related problems. Look for reasons to be pleasant and to forgive people who make you angry. You may live longer as a result, and you'll probably enjoy life more.



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The Wellness News

Tips and resources for living well

November 2019

Diabetes Awareness: Signs, Symptoms and Types



November is recognized as American Diabetes Month, a time to recognize the seriousness of the disease and the importance of diabetes control and prevention. An estimated 30.3 million people of all ages have diabetes in the U.S. Now is the time to educate yourself on the prevalence of diabetes and key steps you can take to decrease your risk of developing the disease.

Know your numbers! Make sure you're having your Fasting Blood Sugar checked as recommended by your physician. Further testing may be required with any out-of-range finding. Your health care provider may order an A1C. The A1C test results are reported as a percentage. The higher the percentage, the higher your blood sugar levels over the past two to three months. The A1C test can also be used for diagnosis, based on the following guidelines:



If you are at higher risk, make sure you work with your physician to lower/eliminate those risks and to monitor your Fasting Blood Sugar more closely. People at higher risk include:

- Older than 45
- Overweight
- Have a Parent or Sibling with Diabetes
- Had Diabetes During a Pregnancy
- Have High Blood Pressure
- Have High Cholesterol
- Inactive
- Have Metabolic Syndrome

Types of Diabetes:

Type 1 diabetes, once known as juvenile diabetes or insulin-dependent diabetes, is a chronic condition in which the pancreas produces little to no insulin. Insulin is a hormone needed to allow sugar (glucose) to enter cells to produce energy. Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune condition. It's caused by the body attacking its own pancreas with antibodies. Different factors, including genetics and some viruses, may contribute to type 1 diabetes. Although type 1 diabetes usually appears during childhood or adolescence, it can develop in adults. Despite active research, type 1 diabetes has no cure. Treatment focuses on managing blood sugar levels with insulin, diet, and lifestyle to prevent complications.

Type 1 diabetes signs and symptoms may include:

- Increased thirst
- Frequent urination
- Bed-wetting in children who previously didn't wet the bed during the night
- Extreme hunger
- Unintended weight loss
- Irritability and other mood changes
- Fatigue and weakness
- Blurred vision



Type 2 diabetes is a chronic condition that affects the way your body metabolizes sugar (glucose) — an important source of fuel for your body. With type 2 diabetes, your body either resists the effects of insulin or doesn't produce enough insulin to maintain normal glucose levels. Type 2 diabetes used to be known as adult-onset diabetes, but today more children are being diagnosed with the disorder, likely due to the rise in childhood obesity. Focus is put on losing weight, eating well, and exercising to help manage the disease. If diet and exercise aren't enough to manage your blood sugar well, you may also need diabetes medications or insulin therapy.

Signs and symptoms of type 2 diabetes often develop slowly. In fact, you can have type 2 diabetes for years and not know it. Look for:

- Increased thirst
- Frequent urination
- Increased hunger
- Unintended weight loss
- Fatigue
- Blurred vision
- Slow-healing sores
- Frequent infections
- Areas of darkened skin, usually in the armpits and neck

Gestational Diabetes

Diabetes that's triggered by pregnancy is called gestational diabetes. It is often diagnosed in middle or late pregnancy. Because high blood sugar levels in a mother are circulated through the placenta to the baby, gestational diabetes must be controlled to protect the baby's growth and development.

According to the National Institutes of Health, the reported rate of gestational diabetes is between 2 to 10% of pregnancies. Gestational diabetes usually resolves itself after pregnancy. Having gestational diabetes does, however, put mothers at risk for developing type 2 diabetes later in life. Up to 10% of women with gestational diabetes develop type 2 diabetes. It can occur anywhere from a few weeks after delivery to months or years later.

Diabetes in any form is a condition that can be managed. It is important to live a healthy lifestyle that includes a balanced diet and exercise. You may benefit from working with a diabetic educator/dietitian. It is important to remember that you can live a normal life and do everything you set out to do.

Sources:

www.mayoclinic.org

www.webmd.com

www.diabetes.org

Exercise as Part of Your Diabetes RX Plan



Physical activity is one very important part of any diabetes management plan. When you exercise, your muscles use sugar from your body for energy. Regular physical activity also helps your body use insulin more efficiently. For these two reasons, exercise lowers your blood sugar level. The more strenuous your workout, the longer the effect lasts. But even light activities — such as housework, gardening or being on your feet for extended periods — can improve your blood sugar. If you are consistently active, you'll be able to better control

your diabetes and keep your blood glucose level in a good range, preventing any long-term health complications, such as nerve damage or kidney disease.

It is very important to check your blood sugar regularly with exercise, especially when beginning an exercise program and if you are taking insulin or any glucose lowering medication. Check it before, during, and after exercise. Keep in mind that exercise can lower your blood sugar levels even a day later, particularly if the activity is new to you, or if you're exercising at a more intensive level. Be aware of warning signs of low blood sugar, such as feeling shaky, weak, lightheaded, anxious, or confused.

If you use insulin and your blood sugar level is below 100 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL), or 5.6 millimoles per liter (mmol/L), have a small snack before you start exercising to prevent a low blood sugar level. You may need to experiment to find a snack that is right for you.

If you are ready to get started with an exercise program remember to:

- Talk to your doctor about an exercise plan that is right for you.
- Set realistic goals for a regular exercise schedule.
- Know your glucose numbers before, during, and after exercise.
- Stay well-hydrated.
- Be prepared with a small snack if needed.
- Adjust your diabetes treatment plan with your doctor as needed.

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, well-being & legal issues.

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Here for you as life happens ...

Sausage Stuffing

Ingredients

- 8 cups of cubed whole-wheat bread, (12 slices)
- 8 ounces of bulk turkey sausage
- 1½ teaspoons of canola oil
- 3 stalks of celery, chopped
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 3 Golden Delicious or McIntosh apples, peeled and chopped
- 2 tablespoons of chopped fresh sage, or 2 teaspoons of dried sage
- 1 teaspoon of chopped fresh thyme or ½ teaspoon dried
- ½ teaspoon of dried basil
- 2 cups of reduced-sodium chicken broth
- ¼ teaspoon of salt
- Freshly ground pepper to taste



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spread bread on a baking sheet and bake until lightly toasted, 15 to 20 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, cook sausage in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat, stirring with a wooden spoon to break it up, until no longer pink, 5 to 10 minutes. Drain in a colander to remove excess fat.
3. Add oil to the pan and heat over medium-low heat. Add celery, onions and garlic; cook, stirring, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add apples and cook, stirring, until tender, 8 to 10 minutes more. Transfer to a large bowl.
4. Add the sausage, toasted bread, sage, thyme and basil to the bowl. Toss well. Drizzle broth over the mixture and toss until evenly moistened. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a lightly oiled 9-by-13-inch baking pan.
5. Cover the stuffing with foil and bake until heated through, 35 to 45 minutes. If you want a crisp top, uncover it for the last 15 minutes.

Health Tip: *Make Your Health a Priority*

- **See your doctor regularly.** Schedule a well-visit with your healthcare provider.
- **Keep up with preventative screenings** – pap, mammogram, colonoscopy.
- **Get active.** Plan for enjoyable physical activity 3-4 times a week.
- **Eat balanced.** Avoid processed foods and sugary drinks.

Action: *Rest Up* – make quality sleep a priority.

Importance of Knowing Your Family History



Thanksgiving is also National Family History Day, so what better time to talk to your family and take the first step to collect your family history. While having a family health history of a disease doesn't mean that you are likely to get it, knowing your family health history risk can help you—if you act on it. Knowing about your family health history of a disease can motivate you to take steps to lower your chances of getting the disease. You can't change your family health history, but you can change unhealthy behaviors, such as smoking, not exercising or being active, and poor eating habits. Below are a few recommended

tips from the CDC on how to have these important conversations.

- **Talk to your family.** Write down the names of your close relatives from both sides of the family: parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews. Talk to these family members about what conditions they have or had, and at what age the conditions were first diagnosed. You might think you know about all the conditions in your parents or siblings, but you might find out more information if you ask.
- **Ask questions.** To find out about your risk for chronic diseases, ask your relatives about which of these diseases they have had and when they were diagnosed. Questions can include:
 - ◆ Do you have any chronic diseases, such as heart disease or diabetes, or health conditions, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol?
 - ◆ Have you had any other serious diseases, such as cancer or stroke? What type of cancer?
 - ◆ How old were you when each of these diseases or health conditions was diagnosed? (If your relative doesn't remember the exact age, knowing the approximate age is still useful).
 - ◆ What is your family's ancestry? From what countries or regions did your ancestors come to the United States?
 - ◆ What were the causes and ages of death for relatives who have died?
- **Record the information and update it whenever you learn new family health history information.** [My Family Health Portrait](#), a free web-based tool, is helpful in organizing the information in your family health history. My Family Health Portrait allows you to share this information easily with your doctor and other family members.
- **Share family health history information with your doctor and other family members.** If you are concerned about diseases that are common in your family, talk with your doctor at your next visit. Even if you don't know all your family health history information, share what you do know. Family health history information, even if incomplete, can help your doctor decide which screening tests you need and when those tests should start.

Be sure to talk with your doctor about steps that you can take, including whether you should consider early screening for the disease. If you have a family health history of disease, you may have the most to gain from lifestyle changes and screening tests. Whether you know a lot about your family health history or only a little, take time to talk to your family about their health histories at family gatherings this holiday season.

Design a Conflict Resolution Strategy



Meet with your team to develop a conflict resolution strategy. Doing so will help you experience fewer, less intense, and more easily

resolved conflicts. Most businesses are advised to establish these intervention strategies as part of their standard business systems, so there is no reason for you not to create one, too. Figuratively, this is an “in-case-of-emergency-break-glass” strategy, but here’s the point: You’re going to have conflicts. Predesigning a strategy allows you to have (1) faster implementation when needed; (2) an agreed-upon approach, where outcomes are more acceptable to team members; and (3) improved awareness to seek cooperation early in order to avoid conflicts entirely. How to develop a strategy: Ask the EAP for guidance, or include it in a facilitative role as part of your conflict resolution strategy.

Try a Winter Garden to Improve Mood



No need to wait for spring to experience Mother Nature’s greenery; savor the rewards now with an indoor garden. This mood enhancer and positive distraction is

easy and inexpensive to create. A Google image-search of “indoor garden ideas” will make you excited about getting started. Winter, with its shorter and grayer days, can be a difficult time for those who experience symptoms of depression. If that’s you, the delight of a small indoor winter garden and watching sprouts go from turf to table may be the uplift you need. (Seek counseling help if the blues linger on.)

Don’t Mix Alcohol with Psychoactive Drugs



Everyone’s heard it: “Don’t mix alcohol with other drugs.” Despite that being nearly universally understood, little research has existed on this topic until now. A recent study

has shown that only one in five nonfatal alcohol overdoses involves only alcohol. The others combined alcohol with drug use. What’s more, any psychoactive drug—marijuana, opioids, cocaine, heroin, and other illicit drugs—increases the likelihood of alcohol overdose, and these overdoses are more severe. That was the surprise to researchers. Source: umich.edu [search: “overdose alcohol drugs”]

Parent Prevention of Teen Dating Violence



Don’t have “the talk” about healthy relationships, mutual respect, manners, and appropriate behavior an hour before your teen’s date arrives. The American Academy of

Pediatrics recommends that these discussions begin when your child is in middle school, before dating begins. Modeling also helps young teens practice relationship health. Parents or guardians play a key role, so consider whether physical or verbal abuse poses a roadblock to your ability to communicate a credible message to your teen. A professional counselor or your EAP can help. If your child is *already* dating and you have not talked about healthy relationships, now is better than never! Learn more at healthychildren.org.

Be a Networking Pro



Most of us will naturally develop a network of supporters, allies, and potential helpers over the years who can play valuable roles in enhancing our careers

and magnifying our influence. Although this is usually a scattered and undefined process, consider making a conscious effort to accelerate this as a practice. Become more “socially aware.” See engaging with others as not just a pleasant social interchange but also an opportunity to consider how you can be of service to them and they to you, now or in the future. The positive benefits of a professional network are, of course, reciprocal. Realize that your address book and professional friends in a membership association or other groups are a virtual gold mine. The hottest tip is to make annual contact with your network by mailing a short postal note with personal news, achievements, and good wishes. Several years of these “touches” will produce tremendous leverage and “top of mind” awareness among your contacts, and you will experience a surprising number of opportunities to help others and be helped by them.

Stop the Downward Slide with EAP Help



Even if you pride yourself on being an optimistic employee with a pleasant disposition, workplace negativity can still affect you in ways that you may

not like. Negativity tends to be as contagious as a cold virus, and it can be a self-perpetuating force. The good news is that negativity in the workplace can be beaten. It has weaknesses, the most important of which is refusing to participate in it. This isn't easy, of course, and it requires education and individual employees willing to be change agents. Here's how: Speak up when you spot negativity, not by criticizing but by educating about its impact and suggesting a different approach to communication. Team up with a coworker to practice this same change-agent role. There is nothing more powerful than peer influence, and you have the right action on your side. Note: If you feel affected by negativity, turn to your EAP for guidance and support to build your resilience so you don't succumb to the limiting pattern around you and instead can be a positive force that influences others.

What Occupational Therapists Can Do



Occupational therapists (OTs) help people—children or adults—achieve their highest possible level of performance despite any diagnosis or disability. OTs are licensed professionals with widely varied skills. They are eager and

master problem-solvers who engage with all areas of living—eating, dressing, sleeping, bathing, school, work, play, habits, routines, memory, and more. OTs also function with schools, visit homes, and consult in the community. An OT may discover why a child is having problems in a classroom or create a way for a veteran with one arm to independently operate a coat zipper. Could you or someone you know with a life obstacle benefit from the expertise of an OT? Search for OT clinics in your community, or talk to your EAP. Myths to bust about OTs are that they work only with the elderly, that they do the same things as physical therapists, and that they participate in repetitive tasks.

Don't Use the Internet as a Doctor



With internet access at our fingertips, using online resources for answers to your health care concerns seems like a fast, reliable, and cheap solution. From the rash on your

leg to the swelling in your neck, “answers” to medical questions seem to be only a click away. But are they the right answers right now? If not, a delay in the right treatment could mean tragedy. With online self-diagnosis and treatment recommendations comes big risk. Does that odd-looking red spot really match the image on Google? Talk to your doctor, and don't let fear be a roadblock to making the call. Doctors are trained in more than just examinations; they are trained in medical history, decision-making, pharmacology, psychology, prognostic indicators, and dozens of other factors. Many or all may be necessary to help you.

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, & legal issues.

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