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## HOLIDAYS GOT YOU DOWN AND (STRESSED) OUT?

### What's The Issue?

Many people experience feelings of sadness, loneliness and stress during the winter holiday season. These are normal feelings to have in response to this time of year. Starting sometime in September the media begin promoting the buying and celebrating that we are “supposed” to engage in during the upcoming holidays. The news relays holiday stories, holiday music is played in public places, stores and streets are decorated, and there becomes this buzz of anticipation that we all feel.

The increased expectations, the triggering of memories and the stress of preparation can lead to negative feelings and to guilt. Negative feelings result from feeling that we are not participating “normally” in the holiday spirit, either because we are not sharing enough gifts or we are not engaged enough with friends and family. And guilt sometimes results because we feel we are “supposed to” be doing these things and enjoying them.

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### What Are The Symptoms?

1. Guilt – that we are not doing enough.
2. Agitation or fatigue – due to tension and stress.
3. Avoidance – of people and activities.
4. Sleep – either disrupted sleep patterns or sleeping too much.
5. Under-eating or over-eating.
6. Drinking – too much alcohol.
7. Headaches – caused by some or all of the above.

### What Can You Do?

- ✓ Allow yourself to experience the feelings you are having. No, I’m not suggesting that you dwell on them, but give yourself permission to have them and not feel obliged to feel festive.
- ✓ Tell someone you trust how you are feeling. Not to complain or whine, but just so you know someone else understands.

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- ✓ Do spend some time with other people. It's one of the best antidotes for feeling down or lonely.
- ✓ Do something for others. Doing someone a favor, volunteering somewhere, going out of your way to help someone out pays great benefits in terms of how we feel about ourselves.
- ✓ Create some new rituals for this time of the year – some things that you feel good about and are meaningful to you (something you do or some place you go).
- ✓ Treat yourself in some way. Do something for yourself that you really appreciate, and remind yourself that you deserve it.

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**I hope this Holidays Got You Down and (Stressed) Out Tip Sheet has been helpful to you. Feel free to forward it to a friend. To obtain professional support for your concerns please contact me, David Weiskotten Ph.D., at 610-746-9588.**