



Got a Case of the Holiday Blues?

Lincoln, NE, December 15, 2017 — Picture this; it's the holiday season, a time for joy and cheer. A season we look forward to celebrating that is full of gift-giving, decorating, feasting and quality family time. However, this year is a little different. Your neighborhood is full of lights and decorations, except for your home. You are avoiding the chaos of Christmas shopping at all costs. The weather and time changes have you feeling extremely fatigued, and your phone calls from friends and family go unanswered. While the Christmas season is considered the most wonderful time of the year, it can leave some feeling more misery than merriment. Don't worry though, this is not uncommon.

Psychologists point out that there is a difference between the holiday blues, which are often temporary and go away once the season ends, and more serious conditions such as depression, seasonal affective disorder and anxiety disorders.

“If people are already experiencing stress or sadness in other areas of their life, they may be especially vulnerable to these feelings during the holidays,” Diane Marti, Ph.D., Nebraska Psychological Association Public Education Coordinator said. “However, the holidays can be a great opportunity to enhance psychological well-being.” Here are some tips provided by NPA and APA to help you beat the holiday blues:

Get moving — Cold, dark weather can leave you feeling drowsy and take a toll on your mood. Engaging in at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day can help release endorphins and boost your energy.

Give to someone in need — Find a local charity, such as a soup kitchen, and volunteer some of your time. Not only is this a way to spend time with your loved ones, you will also feel a sense of purpose. Volunteering has also been shown to reduce stress and improve mood.

Start a new holiday tradition — Sometimes the holidays are seen in a negative light due to memories with lost loved ones or past traumatic experiences. If certain aspects of the holidays make you cringe, get creative and start a new tradition with your family. This will be a time to bond, as well as something that can be celebrated for years to come.

Have realistic expectations — No holiday celebration is perfect. View inevitable missteps as opportunities to demonstrate flexibility and resilience. A lopsided tree or a burned brisket won't ruin the holiday; rather, it will create a family memory. Self-critical thoughts tend to crop up during this time of year which are hard to overcome. Be wary of this inner voice and challenge yourself to take a kind attitude towards yourself rather than a negative one.

Seek Support — Talk about the anxiety, stress or sadness with friends and family. Getting things out in the open can help people navigate their feelings and work toward a solution for the holiday blues. If the feelings persist, consider seeing a professional such as a psychologist. They are uniquely trained to understand the connection between the mind and body. They can offer strategies as to how goals can be adjusted so they are attainable as well as help people change unhealthy behaviors and address emotional issues. You can access additional tips, handouts and information at: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/holiday-stress.aspx>.

To learn more about mind/body health, visit www.apa.org/healthcenter and follow @APAHelpCenter on Twitter. To find out more about NPA visit www.nebpsych.org and follow us on Twitter at @NEPsychAssoc.