

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

DECEMBER 2023

MENTAL HEALTH AND HOLIDAYS – PART II

DENIAL: REGARDLESS OF THE SITUATION, MY PEACE WILL NOT BE DISTURBED.

AFFIRMATION: AS I MOVE THROUGH THIS DAY, I RESOLVE TO SPREAD MY LIGHT WHEREVER I GO.

SCRIPTURE: THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE, WE WILL REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT. Psalm 118:24

‘TIS THE SEASON TO BE MINDFUL

The birth of our Lord is **one** of the most celebrated religious holidays in the Christian world. However, the celebration of Christmas is not restricted to believers. Christmas is celebrated around the world and is recognized, by some, as a cultural holiday. The common elements in both modes of celebration are expectations of food, family, friends, gift-giving and overall festive times.

Feelings of sadness that last throughout the holiday season—especially during the months of November and December—are often referred to as the holiday blues or holiday depression.

The holidays are usually viewed as a time of happiness and rejoicing. For some, however, it can be a period of painful reflection, sadness, loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Contributing to negative holiday emotions could be the constant bombardment of messages, through media and other means, that everyone is supposed to be happy during holidays¹

Even people who love the holidays can experience the blues during this busy season. The holidays are often a time of high emotion and demands, which can leave feelings of stress and exhaustion.

What are some suggestions to offset the negative feelings of holidays?

1. Stick to Your Routine

For many people, the holidays lead to a massive disruption in their day-to-day routine. Be mindful of this and stay on schedule, especially with your spiritual practices.

2. Accept Your Feelings

Try your best to acknowledge and accept your emotions rather than place judgment on them. Give yourself compassion and allow yourself to sit with whatever you're feeling.

3. Moderation is the Key

Alcohol is a depressant. Drinking too much could intensify negative feelings. Instead, limit your consumption of alcohol. Food can also be used to deal with or avoid difficult emotions. If you're stuffing your face to avoid telling Aunt Ruthie what she did when you were six years old, it might be beneficial to push back from the table and remove yourself from the immediate trigger.

4. Set Boundaries

No means no! Avoid letting others coerce or "brow beat" you into an activity that does not hold your interest or takes you out of your comfort zone. It's OK to limit the time you spend with anyone you may have a complicated dynamic with.

Money, money, money: Monitor your spending. Realistically, you know what your limits are. Don't dig yourself into a financial hole that will have you paying for this Christmas, next Christmas.

5. Make Time To Connect

Be your Brother's keeper. Although holiday blues may not affect you, but could affect someone around you. Check in with others to see how they are doing. Your concern could mean more than you know. Connection and meaning are critical to our mental health.* Make time for your important relationships and connect with yourself through self-care.

A Christmas Prayer

Father God:

Although we have many reasons to rejoice today, Lord, we also know December 25th can be not-so-merry for a whole host of reasons. We pray for those who are experiencing loss this Christmas: relational, financial, spiritual and physical.

We pray for those who are coping with loving a prodigal and our friends and family members whose hearts are far from You. We pray for those dealing with unemployment, addictions, homelessness, chronic sickness ... and unending pain and frustrations of all kinds. Thank You, Lord, that You are The Wonderful Counselor and Prince of Peace, even in the midst of our not-so-merry circumstances.

Finally, Lord, we ask You to grant us peace. Peace in our homes, peace in our churches, and peace in our hearts, when the world all around us spins out-of-control. Help us to stay focused on You, this Christmastime and always. Thank You for loving the whole world enough to send the greatest gift, Your Son, so that we might truly have a very merry Christmas. In Jesus' name, Amen.

FOOTNOTE

¹*Gillison, Daniel Jr., The Most Difficult Time of the Year: Mental Health During the Holiday, National Alliance on Mental Illness, December 20, 2021.*

***If signs of depression or any other form of the “blues” continue, PLEASE contact a mental health professional as soon as possible. Thank you.**

SUBMITTED BY BISHOP JUANITA GILLIS AND

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