

What is Holiday Depression?

Why Do People Get Depressed Around the Holidays?

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

The melancholia associated with the holiday season can be a combination of several emotional/mental health factors that join together to compound symptoms of depression. “Holiday depression” can occur just before, during, or after the holidays. It is largely the “holiday season” timing of the appearance of, or worsening of symptoms that leads to the label “holiday depression. Seasonal activities, memories, and additional stress also contribute.

Many people who experience chronic depression find that their depression worsens around the holidays. There are a number of reasons that people get more depressed during the holidays.

- An increase in stressors challenges our resources to keep it appropriately managed or under control. Sometimes a person’s resources are inadequate to the accumulation of stressors and the escalation in intensity of the stressors. People, who are already over-tasked may easily become overwhelmed.
- Others may be dealing with unresolved loss and grief in addition to holiday stressors. The holidays also represent a time of increased intensity of grief, as memories of the lost loved ones come flooding back.
- Seasonal Affective Disorder is also a contributing factor for many. Seasonal affective disorder happens during the winter months when the days are shorter and there is less sunlight.
- The holidays are also a time when many people’s priorities shift. Many depressed people are able to successfully managing their depression with medication and/or exercise, appropriate self-care, socializing, counseling, or other activities. Since “the holidays” are a time limited occurrence, the demands to accomplish more and more during the holidays, take a front seat as appropriate self-care activities get moved to the back burner. As these depression management techniques recede, depression symptoms may increase.

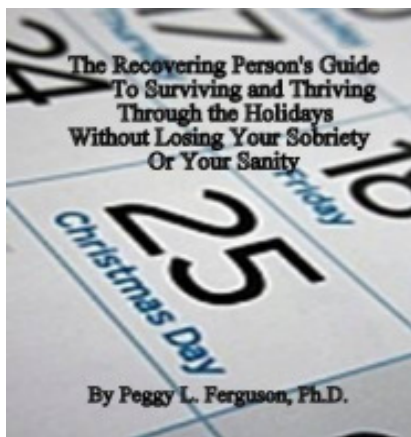
Many people who experience holiday depression, question whether it is a more serious form of depression. A mental health professional can help you sort that out. Just as there is treatment and recovery for major depression, there are also treatments and techniques for eliminating or reducing holiday depression.

Many times, uncomplicated holiday depression can be reduced or managed by stepping up your self care, reducing your stress, and using a social support system. Help is available. For many, counseling is appropriate. For others, a visit to your family physician and a prescription for an antidepressant may be appropriate. Often a more effective approach could be medication along with counseling. Your doctor can assess for seasonal affective disorder, as well.

Those grieving the loss of significant loved ones can also find help through grief support groups. Grief has no time limit. People usually grieve as long as they need to. When intense grief persists over an exceptionally long time, it could be complicated bereavement and counseling would be appropriate. Holiday depression can be reduced or effectively managed by taking pro-active steps.

Some appropriate action for reducing holiday stress:

1. Step up efforts at self care. (Eat right, exercise, get enough sleep, etc.)
2. Make a conscious effort to reduce your stress. (Slow down, identify your priorities, problem solve instead of worrying, etc.)
3. Connect socially with the people who build you up, energize you, or comfort you. Reduce the amount of time you spend with others who bring you down.
4. Read up on other things you can do to reduce your stress and your depression.



My ebook, *The Recovering Person's Guide to Surviving and Thriving Through The Holidays Without Losing Your Sobriety or Your Sanity*, is available for purchase [here](#) . Although written for the person recovering from alcoholism/addiction, it has a multitude of helpful information for anyone suffering from holiday depression and/or stress. PDF file format \$7.95

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<https://sites.google.com/site/holidaystressanddepression/>

<https://howtoovercomeholidaystressanddepression.wordpress.com/>

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