

Avoiding the Holiday Blues

Holiday Blues? Men's Health Network offers suggestions to help you identify and ward off—or at least better cope with—potential sources of holiday depression.

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, USA, December 9, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [AVOIDING THE HOLIDAY BLUES](#)

Alphonso Gibbs, Jr., LCSW-C, LICSW,
Advisory Board Member
Men's Health Network
www.MensHealthNetwork.org



Men's Health Network

The six weeks encompassing Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's—collectively called "the holidays"—are for most, a magically unique time of year, filled with holiday carols, reunions, displays of colorful lights, love, and affection, often expressed through gift giving.

For the better part of 2020, we have all been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the stresses brought on by racial tensions, and the political dramas of the 2020 election. Now, we have to make hard decisions on whether to gather with our loved ones for the holidays, or continue to socially distance from them until we get the all clear.

With support from the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), Men's Health Network has convened a series of conferences examining depression and related issues in boys and men."

*Alphonso Gibbs, Jr., LCSW-C,
LICSW,*

For some, the holidays bring hurt. Caused by factors such

as those already mentioned, along with the weather (seasonal depression); extended separation, death, financial stress, unemployment, unrealistic expectations, hyper-sentimentality, guilt, or overspending. Holiday depression—also called the "holiday blues"—can zap the merriment out of even the most wonderful time of the year. Now, one must make hard decisions on whether to visit, whom to visit, and how to prepare for the visit—such as getting a COVID-19 screen prior to the visit.

The "holiday blues" only seem to get worse as we near the end of the year.

Holiday depression affects one million people every year. Men and women, young and old, all fall victim to feelings of sadness, loneliness, anxiety, guilt, and fatigue during this emotionally charged time.

Men's Health Network offers the following 10 suggestions to help you identify and ward off—or at least better cope with—potential sources of holiday depression.

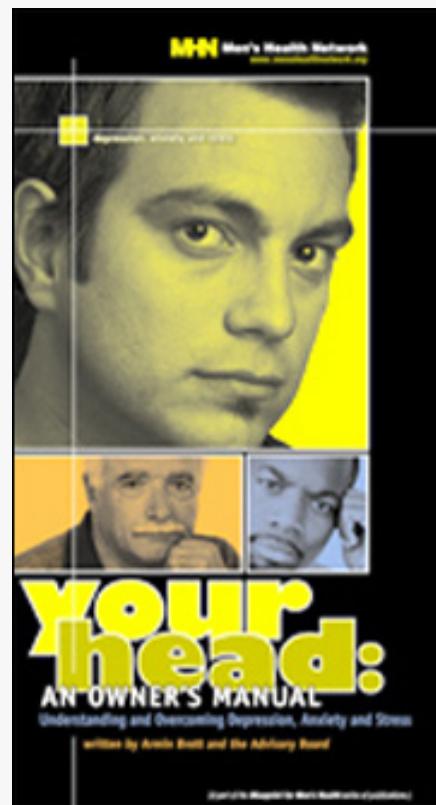
1. Acknowledge that you're hurting. Others may expect certain attitudes and behaviors from you that you may not feel. The retail industry's "holiday hype" presents an overly sentimental, nostalgic, and even imaginary notion of the holidays (usually to try to sell you something). Still, feelings of sadness, loneliness, or depression don't automatically vanish just because it's the holidays. Acknowledge your pain, be open and honest with others, refuse to feel guilty, and get help if necessary. It's ok to laugh! Don't be afraid! You won't be struck by a bolt of lightning for laughing. Remember, a closed mouth won't get fed.

2. Have a plan to deal with your feelings. Try to surround yourself with people who care about and support you—family, friends, or church members. Exercise programs (aerobic activities such as walking, running, cycling, etc.) are recommended because of their mood-elevating ability). If necessary, see your doctor or therapist. And learn to say "no." Others' expectations are not a reason for your own mental health to suffer.

3. Set realistic expectations. Keep your expectations realistic rather than perfectionistic. Prioritize



Alphonso Gibbs, Jr., LCSW-C, LICSW



Your Head, an Owner's Manual

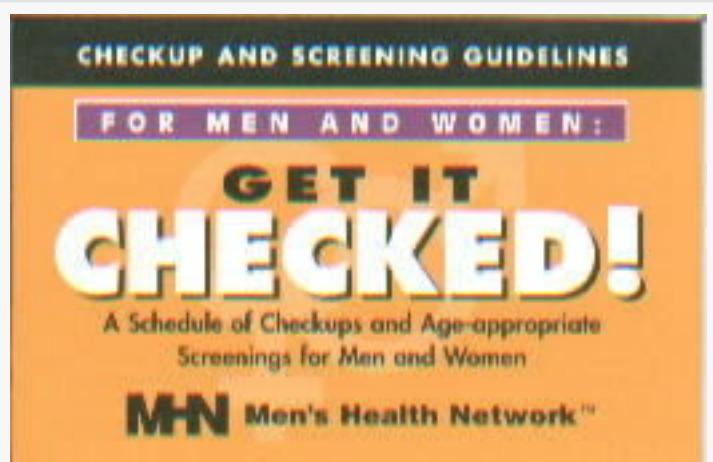
and reduce self-imposed holiday preparations. Delegate responsibilities. Realistically plan your budget, spending, and shopping. Do less and enjoy more. Obsessing over endless details is bound to change this long-awaited, once-a-year season from a time of exuberance to one of exhaustion. Make it a point to be honest with yourself, and if necessary and possible, limit the time and situations/people you want to be around. When you've had enough of either, make sure that you have a way to leave or step away.

4. Take time for yourself. Why is it called holiday depression? Because, for people who suffer from it, the negative feelings don't occur at other times of the year. Remind yourself of what you enjoyed during the previous months, then continue those things during the holidays. Make yourself a priority! Instead of a "Discount Double Check," give yourself an "Emotional Double Check". Give yourself permission to feel what you feel—just don't stay there too long. Getting enough rest, eating and drinking in moderation, exercising, and continuing other favorite activities can maintain normalcy, routine, control, and predictability.

5. Consider that your depression may actually be caused by this time of year. Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD, occurs because of reduced exposure to sunlight—which is just what happens during the holiday season when daylight hours are shorter. Check with your doctor to see if light therapy might be beneficial for you.

6. Help others. Soup kitchens, homeless shelters, nursing homes, churches, and scores of other organizations can always use volunteers, especially at critical times of the year. Additionally, you'll benefit from the company of other people around you rather than being alone. At the same time, help others help you! Tell those who care about you what you do or don't need from them. Most people truly want to help but they often don't know what to do or say.

7. Bury the hatchet. Perfect families don't magically appear during the holidays, but family



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conflicts can. Letting go and forgiving can help heal past wounds. Additionally, family feuds can be deliberately set aside until after the high-tension holidays in order to facilitate everyone's peace and enjoyment at this special—but challenging—time.

8. Start your own traditions. Families and traditions both change with time. (Every tradition had to start somewhere, right?) Rather than reminiscing over the good old days, accept the fact that change may be necessary, grasp the season as it is now, look forward to the future, and create your own family traditions that can be enjoyed and even preserved for future generations. This is the year of Zoom meetings, online parties, and other virtual gatherings. They are much cheaper, safer, and easier to organize than traveling. All you need is a webcam and internet access.

9. Keep your alcohol intake low. Don't pour gasoline on a fire. Remember, alcohol has a depressive effect on your nervous system and your mood, so if you're experiencing the holiday blues, drinking too much alcohol will make everything worse.

10. Rededicate yourself to your spirituality. The "reason for the season" is often swallowed up by maddening materialism that can distract from the history, meaning, and significance of holiday celebrations. Step back, slow down, and refocus on transcendent, eternal matters. Rededicate yourself to spiritual pursuits, such as church attendance, church work, prayer life, and other disciplines. Regain the focus originally intended by this time of year.

11. Every day, veterans who served in the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard connect with proven resources and effective treatments for depression and find solutions that improve their lives. It can be difficult to handle depression on your own, so talking to your family and friends can be a first step. You can also consider connecting with:

- Your doctor. Ask if your doctor has experience treating Veterans or can refer you to someone who does. If you feel comfortable enough with your physician, he or she may be able to help you find tools to manage loss of interest or pleasure even without direct experience with Veterans.
- A mental health professional, such as a therapist
- Your local VA Medical Center or Vet Center. VA specializes in the care and treatment of Veterans.
- A spiritual or religious adviser

Resources and Helplines

SAMHSA - Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
800-662-HELP (4357)
www.samhsa.gov

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
800-273-TALK (8255)
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Your Head: An Owner's Manual

www.YourHead.org

ULifeline.org – Online resources for students

www.ulifeline.org

Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)

<https://www.pcori.org/topics/mental-and-behavioral-health>

Men's Health Network

Men's Health Network (MHN) is an international non-profit organization whose mission is to reach men, boys, and their families where they live, work, play, and pray with health awareness messages and tools, screening programs, educational materials, advocacy opportunities, and patient navigation. Men can learn more about their health through MHN's online resource center, www.MensHealthResourceCenter.com

Learn more about MHN at www.MensHealthNetwork.org .Follow us on Twitter @MensHlthNetwork and Facebook at www.facebook.com/menshealthnetwork

Communications

Men's Health Network

+1 202-543-6461

[email us here](#)

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