



# Employee Enhancement Newsletter

*Helpful Resources from your Employee Assistance Program*

December 2013

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## Help for the Holiday Blues

The holidays can be a stressful time. The festivities can lead to anxiety related to excessive shopping for friends and family, finding time for social obligations, worrying about holiday debt, and trying to do too much. You can detour from your everyday routine, neglecting proper nutrition and regular exercise. These pressures can lead to the phenomenon known as holiday depression or the holiday blues.

### ***Will your Holiday be Blue?***

According to the National Mental Health Association (NMHA), depression peaks over the holidays. The unrealistic expectations of the season, time and financial pressures, missing loved ones, and reflecting on past events as the year comes to an end can all contribute.

During the holidays, a person can experience depression, loneliness, sadness, isolation, anger, and abnormal sleep. Those who don't experience depression can experience other symptoms such as headaches, tension, fatigue, excessive drinking, and over-eating.

It also is common to feel a holiday letdown after the holidays are over. The hectic holiday period and the feeling of being physically and emotionally drained can leave you with the sense of loss or frustration, and then that can turn into the blues.

The holiday blues can range from mild sadness during the holidays to severe depression, and they are often a normal reaction to life situations.

### ***Terminology***

Holiday blues should not be confused with clinical depression. Clinical depression is a disorder that may need to be relieved with medication, while the holiday blues could require something as simple as a good listener. Clinical depression, however, can be triggered in a number of ways at or just after the holidays.

There is also a tendency to link the holiday blues with seasonal affective disorder (SAD). SAD, however, is a diagnosable disorder that is associated with fewer hours of sunlight during the winter. Although people with the holiday blues also can be afflicted with SAD, the two are not directly related. People with SAD have symptoms of major depression not only throughout the holiday season, but also throughout the autumn and winter seasons.

## *Chat Reminder*

### *Beating the Holiday Blues*

Connect with Deer Oaks and a counselor for a live confidential chat.

#### **When:**

December 18, 2013

#### **Where:**

[www.deeroaks.com](http://www.deeroaks.com)

#### **Session Time (CST):**

12:15 PM to 12:45 PM





# Help for the Holiday Blues

continued...



## ***Keeping the Blues Away***

The holiday blues may be alleviated with something as simple as getting enough rest. People actually lose sleep during the holidays and end up shortchanging themselves. Consequences of not getting enough sleep might be cloudy thinking, irritability and inability to deal with everyday stress.

Other ways to help ease the blues are to eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and to start exercising. Also, make an effort to stay positive.

## ***Tips to Ease the Blues***

If you are experiencing holiday blues, try to decrease or alleviate them by doing these things:

- Talk honestly to someone.
- Limit alcohol intake.
- Stick within your normal life routine as much as possible.
- Set a realistic budget and then stick to it.
- Establish realistic goals and expectations.
- Do not label the season as a time to cure past problems.
- Don't be afraid to say no. That means don't attend parties when you don't really have time, don't take on obligations that will crowd your time and, don't overextend yourself.
- Find time for yourself.
- Enjoy free holiday activities.
- Try to celebrate the holidays in a different way.

The holiday blues can be quite common, but if you are feeling especially down—for example, your sleep or your appetite is affected—contact your health care provider or visit the National Mental Health Association online at <http://www.nmha.org> for help and guidance. If you are thinking about suicide, call 911 or your health care provider immediately.

Source: <http://www.rmhonline.com/Main/HealthLibrary/533.aspx>

# What's Your Excuse?

So you want to be physically active, but something is holding you back. Figure out what's standing in your way, and then clear a path because you can make regular physical activity part of your life, says the government's Weight-Control Information Network (WIN).



Excuse #1: I'm too busy to exercise because I have work, family, and other demands.

- Make physical activity a priority. Carve out some time each week to be active and put it on your calendar. Try waking up a half-hour earlier to walk, scheduling lunchtime workouts, or taking an evening fitness class.
- Build physical activity into your routine chores. Rake the yard, wash the car, or do energetic housework. That way you do what you need to do around the house and move around too.
- Make family time physically active. Plan a weekend hike through a park, a family softball game, or an evening walk around the block.

Excuse #2: I'm just too tired to work out at the end of a long day.

- Think about the other health benefits of physical activity. Regular physical activity may help lower cholesterol and blood pressure. It may also lower your risk of having heart disease, type 2 diabetes, or cancer. Research shows that people who are overweight, active, and fit live longer than people who are not overweight but are inactive and unfit. Also, physical activity may lift your mood and increase your energy level.
- Do it just for fun. Play a team sport, work in a garden, or learn a new dance. Make getting fit something fun.
- Train for a charity event. You can work to help others while you work out.

Excuse #3: Getting on a treadmill or stationary bike is boring.

- Meet a friend for workouts. If your buddy is on the next bike or treadmill, your workout will be less boring.
- Watch TV or listen to music or an audio book while you walk or pedal indoors. Check out music or audio books from your local library or download to your phone or iPod.
- Get outside. A change in scenery can relieve your boredom.

Health-e headlines™

## Short and Brisk Walks

High blood pressure—it can increase your risk for heart attack and stroke. Exercise has been shown to decrease blood pressure. And a study at Indiana University published in the Journal of Hypertension found that participants who took four 10-minute walks were able to affect blood pressure just as effectively as participants who walked continuously for 40 minutes.

Health-e headlines™

## Lives Saved

Stop-smoking programs and policies are credited with preventing more than 795,000 lung cancer deaths in the U.S. from 1975 through 2000, according to an analysis funded by the National Cancer Institute.

Health-e headlines™

## An EAP Reminder

*Life Can Be Hectic. The EAP Can Help You Find Your Balance.*

Deer Oaks, your EAP, is always available to you and your household members.

If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.

Counselors are available 24/7 to provide you with immediate care.



DEER OAKS EAP SERVICES



## Clinician's Corner..

*Monthly Advice from the Deer Oaks Clinical Team*



## Coping with Holiday Stress

Do you ever notice that from Halloween through New Years, we are often inundated with messages and images of people having the most perfect holiday? "Find the perfect gift," "make this a perfect Thanksgiving," "serve a perfect meal," "make this a holiday that will be unforgettable." No pressure, right? Add on top of that the stress of planning holiday travels (or making accommodations for your visiting guests), finding extra time for shopping, baking, cleaning, and preparing, not to mention trying to keep your budget (and the scale) in your eyesight at all times and you have a recipe for stress. Furthermore, holidays can often remind us of family, friends, and loves that we have lost.

The first tip to coping with holiday stress is to accept it: it's simply unavoidable. By not aligning your standards with the hundreds of commercials we see, and instead, accepting that you'll have a holiday with some imperfections, you're already setting yourself up for success. It's okay that the turkey gets a little overcooked, or that you couldn't find the "perfect gift" and instead opted for a gift card.

Although counterintuitive, it's especially important to make time for yourself. Sure you have even more errands to do, but by letting your self-care fall by the wayside, you're setting yourself up to get burnt out and not only forget the spirit of the season, but perhaps end up feeling even more anxious or depressed. Even starting your day with deep breaths, or doing one short activity (even five to ten minutes) that brings you enjoyment, can help you feel more balanced and ready to conquer the seemingly endless holiday to-do list.

Lastly, take some time to remind yourself of the aspects of the season that are important to you. Take time to grieve or reflect on those who aren't a part of your life anymore. Remember what does bring you happiness, or what is meaningful to you and focus on those things. Don't try to make this year as good as years past, or as perfect as can be. Make it meaningful and you'll be sure to find joy out of the season.

If you're finding yourself feeling exceptionally sad or worried, talk to those who you trust and can offer you support. Keeping your feelings hidden doesn't have any benefits in the long-run. If you still aren't feeling better, you can always reach for professional support to help bust your holiday blues.

By:

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## Is Layaway a Good Option for Shoppers this Holiday Season?

Wow! Where has the year gone? I can't believe the holiday season is right around the corner. And, of course, that means the holiday shopping season has already begun. For many Americans these are still financially trying times and many people are looking to have a festive holiday with a frugal budget.

Recently, an old acquaintance has come back into the holiday shopping mix. Layaway is a payment plan option for buying big ticket items in installments without using a credit card. Many retailers offer layaway plans throughout the holiday shopping season, including, department, jewelry, appliance, and electronic stores. If you are considering using a layaway plan consider these tips.

- *Know what you can afford.* Before entering into a layaway plan decide how much you can afford to spend and develop a budget. Don't purchase an item on a layaway plan without shopping around for the best price. Make sure the item is affordable and you can pay it off within a reasonable time frame.
- *Read the fine print.* Understand the terms and conditions of the layaway plan before signing on the dotted line. Make sure you understand the length of the payment plan, interest rates, and what happens if you fail to pay.
- *Understand the store's return policy.* You may buy something and decide you don't want it half way through the layaway plan. Understanding the merchant's return policy is crucial when paying for something over time. Do you get all or some of your money back? Will the merchant only offer store credit? Is the item even returnable once a layaway plan is set up? What if you need to make an exchange? These are questions to consider.
- *Consider other payment options.* Often as consumers we will buy items as an instant gratification - especially when there is a "buy now, pay later" option available. Instead try saving for a major purchase. This way you won't have to use in-store financing or a credit card.

Source:

By Renee McGruder on November 04, 2011

<http://www.moneymanagement.org/Community/Blogs/Blogging-for-Change/2011/November/Is-layaway-a-good-option-for-shoppers-this-holiday-season.aspx>



### About Money Management International

Money Management International (MMI) is a nonprofit, full-service credit-counseling agency, providing confidential financial guidance, financial education, counseling and debt management assistance to consumers since 1958. MMI helps consumers trim their expenses, develop a spending plan and repay debts. Counseling is available by appointment in branch offices and 24/7 by telephone and Internet. Services are available in English or Spanish. To learn more, call 800.432.7310 or visit [www.MoneyManagement.org](http://www.MoneyManagement.org).