

Superintendent's Newsletter

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Tips for Handling the Holiday Blues

There are a lot of expectations that the holiday season is an occasion filled with joy and fun, as well as beloved family and friends. However, for many, the season can also be filled with sadness and stress. Indeed, it may be a time spent grieving a loved one, being around people with whom you may have complicated relationships, struggling with financial concerns, or feeling lonely. If you are feeling this way, you are not alone. The holiday blues are not so uncommon because life is not always easy, and these special times often force us to confront or reflect on these challenges in new or more intense ways.

Here are some tips offered by Ken Duckworth, MD who is the medical director of the National Alliance for Mental Health:

Don't worry about how things should be. There's a lot of cultural pressure during the holidays. We tend to compare ourselves with these idealized notions of perfect families and perfect holidays. But remember, those other families doubtlessly have their own stressors to contend with.

Be realistic. You can't please everyone the rest of the year, so why try to during the holidays? Saying 'no,' whether to gatherings or a present on someone's wish list that you simply cannot find, can be one of the most challenging parts of the season. But your own mental and physical well-being needs to come first.

Don't try to be a superhero (or heroine). We all have complex family dynamics. Acknowledge them, but also acknowledge that, despite the season's near-universal message of unity and peace, it's not a realistic outlook. If you must spend time with these people, try to limit your exposure.

Volunteer. Volunteering can be a great source of comfort, simply knowing that you're making a small dent in the lives of people who are not as fortunate. This is a great strategy if you feel lonely or isolated. Consider seeking out other community, religious or other social events.

Keep your own well-being in mind. Yes, the holidays are technically the season of giving. But that doesn't mean you should take yourself completely out of the equation—instead, add yourself to it. Give yourself some time away from the hype, even if it's just for half an hour a day. Exercise can also help, with its known anti-anxiety, anti-depression effect.

Thank you Dr. Duckworth. This is very sound advice!