



# Serene Scene

Transitional Sober Living Magazine

LONG BEACH®  
**SERENE CENTER**

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December, 2010 Issue

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## HANDLING THE HOLIDAY BLUES

*Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC II*



Andrew Martin  
M.B.A., CADC II



Holidays are a time of family togetherness, festive partying, quality time with friends, laughing, gift exchanging, and reminiscing. At least, this is what most people think holidays are about. Sadly, many people consider the holidays a time of trouble, anxiety and depression. People who feel and think this way are missing the joy of the holidays because they suffer from the holiday blues.

### Symptoms of the holiday blues may include:

- Decreased energy, fatigue
- Headaches
- Persistent sadness, anxiety, or emptiness
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Inability to get to sleep, sleeping too much, or waking up too early
- Eating too much, eating too little
- Irritability, agitation
- Excessive feelings of guilt
- General reduction in mood, especially when participating in activities that normally bring pleasure (e.g. food, sex, friends, entertainment, hobbies)
- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Difficulty concentrating

# HANDLING THE HOLIDAY BLUES

*Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC II*

Holiday blues rob people from experiencing a quality of life befitting a merry human being. That is because the stress associated with the holiday blues can be significant. The stress is a result of numerous factors that can build up over time.

|                             |                                    |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Pressure to feel merry      | Fatigue                            |
| Inability to be with family | Wanting things to be perfect       |
| Unrealistic expectations    | Holding on to memories of the past |
| Loneliness                  | Memories of deceased loved ones    |
| Strained family dynamics    | Change in daily routines           |
| Financial limitations       | Over commercialization             |
| Change in diet              | Attempts to over control           |

Fortunately, because the holiday blues are primarily the result of mismanaged stress, many things can be done or avoided which will reduce and/or eliminate the holiday blues.

## Things to avoid in order to minimize the holiday blues:

| Behavior   | Reasoning  |
|--|--|
| Stay away from mood altering addictive substances during the holidays. | Depressants (including alcohol), stimulants (including caffeine), hallucinogens, entactogens, opioids, benzodiazepines, and other psychoactive drugs all lead to the impairment of emotions, cognitions and perceptions. While it may seem that an escape from the stress of the holidays is appropriate, the fact is that avoidance of mismanaged stress is detrimental to one's short-term and long-term health. |
| Do not maintain unrealistic expectations.                              | Expecting others to behave in specific ways is, simply put, a set-up for aggravation and disappointment. Realize that there is no way to control another person's behavior at any time. Additionally, expecting too much of one's self can cause increased feelings of guilt and shame which are not conducive to healthy thought process.   |
| Try to focus on what you do have, not on what you do not have.         | Pessimism and feelings of hopelessness serve only to compound the distorted and depressive thought processes brought on by unmanaged stress. Focus on the gifts of life, nature, spirit, and those people who are supportive and loving: it is these thoughts that will lift mood.   |

# HANDLING THE HOLIDAY BLUES

*Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC li*

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| Stay in the present, and do not dwell on the past. | The past is done; there is nothing anyone can do today that will change the past. Accepting the past and then moving thoughts into the present will enable happiness and joy to come in the moment. Be present so those moments do not go missed. |
| Do not overindulge in holiday feasts.              | Holiday foods are notoriously high in fat and sugar, which is why they taste so great! Eating these foods in moderation is terrific, but overindulgence causes changes in the body that promote mood swings.                                      |

## Things to encourage in order to minimize the holiday blues:

| Behavior   | Reasoning   |
|--|---|
| Try to be healthy.   | Eating healthy, exercising, getting enough rest and sleep, and taking care of one's personal needs first can go a very long way toward holiday happiness.   |
| Be honest with one's self.   | Realistic goals are critical to avoid the trap of feeling overwhelmed and self-pity. During the busy days of the holiday season make prioritized lists of things that need to be done, organize time realistically to get things done, and delegate when necessary. |
| Set a budget and stick to it.                                      | Financial pressures are real for everyone, especially during the holidays. Make a budget that includes all of the functions and gift giving activities. Update the budget as the holiday season progresses. Do not allow over spending.                             |
| Do something for someone else.                                     | Volunteering or going out of your way to do something helpful for someone less fortunate is an excellent way to grasp the spirit of the holidays.   |
| Create simple family traditions that bring people closer together. | Traditions are a great way to share experiences with loved ones. Sometimes, old traditions need to be shed, and new traditions can be developed to reflect current times. New and different ways of celebration are often ideal for bringing holiday merriment.     |
| Spend time with people you love and they love you back.            | Family includes those outside of blood relatives as well. Holiday gatherings with close friends are rewarding too.  |
| Accept your feelings.  | Give yourself permission to feel sad or lonely. These emotions are normal, especially during the holiday season. Feel what you are feeling, and then move on.   |

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# HANDLING THE HOLIDAY BLUES

Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC II

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|------------------------------------|--|
| Take a personal time break.        | Holiday hectic scheduling can take its toll. Feel all right about giving yourself some personal time to do with as you like. Personal time is about taking care of yourself.                         |
| Do something special for yourself. | Do something nice for yourself, make a special meal, go to a special event, or buy yourself a special gift. It is fun to spoil yourself every so often, and the holidays is a great time to indulge. |

Taking action to influence the holiday blues is a necessity, especially if you are someone who regularly feels down during the holidays. By taking simple actions, you will be able to alter your mood significantly and experience a splendid holiday season. **SS**



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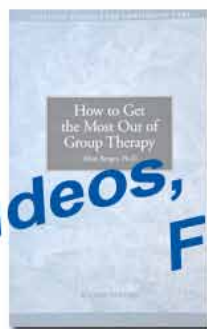
It seems time to step back and conduct a professional inventory of where we have been, where we are now, and where we are heading.

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