

WORST-CASE SCENARIO®

HOW TO OVERCOME HOLIDAY DEPRESSION

1

Avoid excess.

Overdoing certain things can promote depression. To prevent the onset of depression:

- Avoid increased stress.
- Avoid increased consumption of alcohol and sugar.
- Avoid poor eating habits and nutritional deficiencies.
- Avoid increased spending and financial burdens.
- Avoid overwhelming social commitments.

2

Eat mood-elevating foods.

L-tryptophane and L-tyrosine, two amino acids, are essential for the production of the mood elevator serotonin. Two natural sources of L-tryptophane are pumpkin seeds and turkey, while L-tyrosine can be found in dairy products, beans, meat, and fish. To support the nervous system and help resolve stress, take B-complex vitamins. Since low levels of magnesium can cause depression, eat green vegetables, since magnesium is part of the chlorophyll complex.

3

Exercise.

Take brisk walks or exercise vigorously. Strenuous exercise increases endorphin levels and elevates the mood. Activity also helps flush the lymphatic system and remove wastes that can adversely affect mood. Exercising outdoors in sunlight is also a mood enhancer.

4 Focus on the brevity of the holiday.
Even the longest day has only 24 hours.

5 Embrace the pain.
Instead of trying to avoid holiday activities (cooking, shopping, cleaning, traveling) or wallowing passively in your depression, actively embrace the very things you dread. This counter-intuitive approach will surprise others as well as yourself, and may shock your system into a better mood. It will also pass the time more quickly.

HOW TO DEAL WITH POST-HOLIDAY DEPRESSION

1 Remove all holiday decorations.
Holiday decorations, while attractive, can also serve to remind you of the celebration that is now a part of the past. Take them down and pack them away.

2 Return all unwanted gifts as soon as possible.
Unwanted gifts that remain in the house only serve as painful reminders of the holidays. Replace these items with new things that you genuinely want, and be happy with your new acquisitions.

3 Recognize the symptoms of post-holiday depression.
The symptoms include apathy toward work, social events, relationships, and goals; loss of energy, appetite, self-esteem; feelings of guilt, hopelessness, or free-floating anxiety; excessive or interrupted sleep; and frequent headaches. Accepting the fact that you

have post-holiday depression is the first step toward dealing with it.

4 Plan another event.
Look ahead to birthdays, trips, anniversaries, and other occasions you can celebrate soon.

5 Think about next year.
Remind yourself that your favorite holidays will be back again next year. Focus on how much fun you will have then.

6 Eat mood-elevating foods and exercise.
See “How to Overcome Holiday Depression,” steps 2 and 3, page 47.

Be Aware

- Holiday depression, stress, and anxiety often arise from letting things go until the last minute or from overspending. Plan and spend accordingly.
- Herbal mood elevators include St. John’s wort, skullcap and oats, kava kava and valerian root, milk thistle, and the Chinese herb Hsiao Yao Wan. Use as directed.
- An underactive thyroid gland can cause depression. If none of the above remedies are successful, have your thyroid checked.
- Many people suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which results from exposure to fewer hours of sunlight. It might be the season, not the holidays, that are at the root of your dissatisfaction.