

Family Living

Focus

by
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As the holiday season approaches, we anticipate family fun and togetherness, the exchange of gifts, and the observance of family traditions that make time spent with loved ones most memorable. But once this wonderful time of celebration, thankfulness, and sharing has passed, many people, young and old, find themselves filled with an overwhelming sense of sadness. What is it about the "post holiday pits" that leave so many of us feeling unusually bleak, blah, and blue after the holidays?

The reasons are many. Family members may be returning to homes far away. Decorations are packed away and returned to storage. Children are restless. Frigid winter weather may begin to chill even the warmest households. And physical fatigue from making countless holiday preparations and going to social gatherings may begin to take its toll on family members.

The post-holiday blues may also be the result of a sense of loss. It may be the loss of looking for-

ward to the holidays. When they are over, many people may feel that they have nothing to look forward to for quite a while. Another culprit may be the unrealistic expectations that people have for the holiday season itself. When gifts or family gatherings are not as perfect as they could be, when long-standing family traditions are abandoned, and when certain family members are not present to share in the holiday spirit, many people are likely to feel let-down and disappointed.

So how can we avoid the holiday blues and prolong the festive, warm feeling of the holiday season? Here are a few suggestions:

Make Expectations Reasonable — If you have looked to the holiday season as a solution to your other dissatisfactions in life, and as the time to "finally be happy", you're almost inevitably going to find that the season can't possibly live up to your expectations for it. Why not make expectations more reasonable. Instead of saying "things just have to go well...", try "it will be nice if..." If your party

or gift weren't as "perfect" as you would have liked them to be, remind yourself that sharing special times with family and friends is what truly matters most at holiday time.

Pace Yourself — Which of the holiday activities that you do really brings you enjoyment? Are there some you impose on yourself that you really do not enjoy? If mailing all those greeting cards to everyone you know has become more of a dreaded chore than a fulfilling activity, maybe it's time to let go of this tradition in favor of another that is more enjoyable for you. With so many tasks to carry out at holiday time, we all need to take more time to relax and enjoy the truly special moments of the season.

Give to Others Even After the Season — One cure-all for the post-holiday blues may be to extend your giving to others in the community. Toys that are no longer used or interesting may be donated to a church or favorite charity. A plate of cookies, a card

in the mail, a phone call, a delivered flower, or a short visit for no particular reason are sure to brighten the day of a friend, relative, neighbor, or someone in need of special attention from another. It is likely that after giving to others, you'll forget all about your own postholiday blues and will become filled instead with a greater sense of warmth and contentment.

Celebrate throughout the year — With everything geared towards the holidays, it's no wonder that the months following seem like a dismal period of winter slush, runny noses, and overall boredom. Keep the holidays in perspective as a happy time, but not the only happy time; as a time to be together with family and loved ones, but not the only family time; and, as a time to let others know you care, but certainly not the only time for caring. By celebrating special moments with friends and family throughout the year, the warm feelings felt throughout the holidays can last year-round.

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