



THE “HOLIDAY BLUES”

By Yvonne Thomas, Ph.D.

Hello! First, let me introduce myself. I am a licensed, private practice psychologist in Brentwood for several years, and a new member of the West L.A. Chamber of Commerce. I have heard many wonderful things about this organization and am delighted to now be a part of it!

I am of the mind-set that it's important for those in the health-care field to give back to the community by providing free education to the public when possible. Concurrently, I have found that people are often confused and/or uncomfortable inquiring about psychology-related topics on their own. Consequently, I've been a member of the local, state, and national media committees providing psychology-related information to the general public for many years. In this spirit, I will be writing some articles for upcoming West Los Angeles Business Journal editions, which I hope prove helpful, timely, and enlightening to you.

This month, we are approaching that time of year often associated with the “holiday blues.” Generally, this refers to feelings that get triggered and/or exacerbated in a person during holidays, especially when there's a cluster of holidays together (i.e., Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, and New Year's). These “blues” are often due to things including: 1) unresolved issues related to one's original family, such as one's parent/s, sibling, etc., since holidays often remind one of his/her family experiences more profoundly than less significant times of the year, and 2) loneliness (due to one not having a significant other and/or adequate support system, living away from friends and family, the “empty nest” syndrome, etc.).

People can experience these “holiday blues” in different ways, feeling such emotions as depression, melancholy, loss, anxiety, and/or stress. There can also be behaviors including isolating oneself from others, tearfulness, irritability, lack of energy and/or motivation, over- or under-eating, and over- or under-sleeping. Cognitively, there can be poor concentration, distractibility which may lead to forgetfulness, and/or a lack of focus. Generally speaking, the “holiday blues” are quite uncomfortable and unpleasant.

There are several things that one can do to alleviate the “holiday blues.” One can exercise to de-escalate anxiety, stress, depression, and apathy. Getting in contact again with people one cares about whether in person, by phone, e-mail, etc. helps a person get out of his/her isolation. Being aware of and keeping up with healthy eating and sleeping habits are important in re-establishing a solid foundation for oneself. Writing down one's thoughts and feelings periodically also is very helpful in releasing pent-up emotions and in perhaps leading to some key realizations about one's feelings, behaviors, and/or thoughts. Going out in the world and being somewhat sociable helps one feel less lonely and more energized. Being kind and nurturing to oneself by doing things one enjoys - basically, being a good, compassionate friend to yourself - can be very comforting and lead to more positive feelings, behaviors, and/or thoughts. If, however, after trying some or all of these tips one still feels quite burdened by the “holiday blues,” it is probably a good idea to seek some professional guidance from a Psychologist to gain peaceful relief and an insightful resolution.

Holidays are to be enjoyed and I hope yours will be! Happy holidays and New Year!

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