

Therapist Suggests

Tips For "Beating" The Holiday Blues

By Audrey C. Lodato
Post Staff Writer

If you tend to get depressed when the holiday season approaches, you're not alone. Many people feel blue at this time of year. Although November-December is the nationally sanctioned time to "get happy," jingling bells in the shopping mall and laughing faces on the TV screen may only serve to make you feel worse rather than better.



John L. Webb Jr.
.....Social worker

Why do people feel down at this time of year? The reasons vary, but according to social worker John L. Webb Jr. of Webb, Webb & Associates and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' Employee Assistance Program, some of them include the high expectations of the season, childhood recollections, economic relationships, and loneliness.

At holiday time, he says, some people "try to compensate for the rest of the year." They may look back and try to make up for what was lacking through the previous 10 or 11 months. When this fails, they get depressed.

For others, the loss of a relationship, whether it be spouse, parent, or other loved one, becomes more acutely felt during the holiday season.

The person who is feeling alone is more apt to get depressed at holiday time, Webb notes. Someone who is single may feel a lack of connectedness especially at this time of year.

Another source of holiday ill spirits is the stress created when families get together and recreate patterns of earlier years.

If you're prone to the holiday blues, what can you do to get through the period with a minimum of psychic pain? Although each person's situation is different, here are some general tips to help see you

through.

1. Acknowledge the fact that you are feeling badly. Don't try to deny or repress your feelings. If your depression is related to a loss, talk to family members or friends about it. You needn't feel guilty about having a good time because your loved one is no longer here to enjoy the holiday with you, for instance.
2. Find some alternate behavior to engage in. If you will be alone during the holidays, do something special for yourself. "Not everyone can give themselves a trip," Webb remarks. "Find what would be satisfying to you."

For example, this year it's likely that Webb's family will be in New York while he remains in Charlotte for Thanksgiving. He's been wanting a new tennis racket and may buy one for himself to compensate for his spending the holiday by himself. Webb hastens to add that what works for one person may not work

for another. Whatever you decide on, it should be something you wouldn't ordinarily do.

3. Give of yourself in some way. If your church or community group is sponsoring a project for the needy, for example, get involved. It'll give you something outside of yourself to focus on.
4. Find someone to spend the holiday with, if you expect to be alone and feel the need for the presence of others. Or, if the prospect of spending time with family is what's getting you down, decide to stay home. There's no sense in setting yourself up for a miserable time. On the other hand, if tensions exist between you and, say, your parents, and if you feel strong in yourself, perhaps the "good will" of the holiday season will help you improve the relationship.
5. If trying to make everything "perfect" for Thanksgiving or Christmas is driving you up a wall, relax. Don't allow your self-esteem to become dependent on how well your fancy dessert turns out or on how many compliments you receive for the splendid table you spread. And if you can't find that special toy your child wants, it's not the end of the world. She or he will survive, and so will you. When stress is bound to build up, build in also some releases.

Whatever happens during the holiday season to make you temporarily blue, remember that, "this, too, shall pass."

Webb summarizes his thoughts on the subject this way: "It's okay to be sad for a period of time; but do build in something to look forward to. Interact with others if that's your preference, or do something for yourself. We can be happy by ourselves."



Mama looks distracted, but 17-month-old Deric Hudson has his mind on one thing only and that's his bottle of fruit juice. The sturdy tyke is taking a nourishment break during a trip into town after his mother, Jacquelyn Hudson, has just returned from a jeweler. (Photo by Audrey Lodato)

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Alfred A. Hart III, an Engineering Technology major at Elizabeth City State University, has recently been named recipient of one of the American Bridge Association annual college academic scholarships. Hart, the son of Mrs. Ozella Hart of Charlotte, was sponsored by the Metrolina Duplicate Bridge Club of Charlotte and is the second college student from Charlotte to receive an ABA scholarship.

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National Family Week

National Family Week will be observed November 24-30. Sponsored by United Family Services, a "Forum for Families" will be held Monday, November 25, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the United Way Building.

Forum panelists will address concerns and trends found in today's families. The overall theme for the discussion will be "What Makes for a Healthy Family?" A question and answer period will follow the panel discussion.

Operation Share

Operation Share and Care, a unique nationwide food program, kicks off nationally Monday, November 25, and will continue through the season. Coordinated locally by Volunteer Action Center, the program is designed to increase public awareness about how private citizens and their organizations can support local food programs.

W. Charlotte Play

On Sunday, December 1, the Sunshine L & P Manufacturers will present a theatrical production, "Sunshine Bedtime Story" at West Charlotte High School's auditorium, 3 p.m.

The program, which will emphasize the true meaning of Christmas, will also feature Stanley Alexander and the Alexander Singers. Mayor Harvey Ganit is expected to give the opening remarks. The Sunshine L & P and Rainbow Beauty were recently in Smith's homecoming parade.

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