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Don't Let the Holiday Blues Get You Down *APA and GPA Offer Tips to Combat the Holiday Blues*

GEORGIA — For many people the holiday season is full of celebrations and cheer but, for some, this season can bring more misery than merriment. With high expectations of gift-giving, decorating, feasting and family gathering, feelings of disappointment, sadness, fatigue, frustration or being overwhelmed are not unusual.

Psychologists point out that there is a difference between the holiday blues, which are often temporary and go away once the season ends, and more serious conditions such as depression, seasonal affective disorder and anxiety disorders.

People are especially vulnerable during this time because the expectation is that happiness prevails during the holiday season and a person compares him or herself with how other relationships seem to be. This is the time when old relationship wounds and losses come to the forefront. People then have a tendency to magnify the negativity of their situation when they compare their situation to others during this season. "If people are already experiencing stress or sadness in other areas of their life, they may be especially vulnerable to these feelings during the holidays," Dr. Blue, a psychologist in solo practice, said. "However, the holidays can be a great opportunity to enhance psychological well-being."

The American Psychological Association's 2013 *Stress in America*TM survey found that approximately two out of three people report experiencing emotional (67 percent) and physical (72 percent) symptoms of stress. However, there are conscious steps people can take to prevent or lessen holiday blues and ensure a worry-free season.

The Georgia Psychological Association and American Psychological Association offer these tips to combat the holiday blues:

Take time for yourself — There may be pressure to be everything to everyone. People should remember that they're only one person and can only accomplish certain things. Sometimes self-care is the best thing people can do. Go for a walk, hang out with a friend, watch a movie or take time out to listen to music or read a new book. Everyone needs time to recharge their batteries — by slowing down, people will actually have more energy to accomplish their goals.

Volunteer — Find a local charity, such as a soup kitchen or a shelter where families can volunteer together. Not only is giving back a great way to spend time with loved ones during the holidays, but helping others has been shown to reduce stress and improve overall mood.

Have realistic expectations — No holiday celebration is perfect. View inevitable missteps as opportunities to demonstrate flexibility and resilience. A lopsided tree or a burned brisket won't ruin the holiday; rather, it will create a family memory. If the children's wish lists are outside the budget, talk to them about the family's finances this year and remind them that the holidays aren't about expensive gifts.

Remember what's important — The barrage of holiday advertising can make people forget what the holiday season is really about. When the holiday expense list is running longer than the monthly budget, scale back and be reminded that what makes a great celebration is loved ones, not store-bought presents, elaborate decorations or gourmet food.

Seek support — Talk about the anxiety, stress or sadness with friends and family. Getting things out in the open can help people navigate their feelings and work toward a solution for the holiday blues. If the feelings persist, consider seeing a professional such as a psychologist. They are uniquely trained to understand the connection between the mind and body. They can offer strategies as to how goals can be adjusted so they are attainable as well as help people change unhealthy behaviors and address emotional issues.

To learn more about mind/body health, visit www.apa.org/helpcenter and follow on Twitter at [@APAHelpCenter](https://twitter.com/APAHelpCenter). To find out more about the Georgia Psychological Association, visit www.gapsychology.org.

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The American Psychological Association, in Washington, D.C., is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. APA's membership includes more than 130,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 54 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives.