

## STRESS AND THE HOLIDAYS

### INTRODUCTION:

The holidays season for **most** people is a ***fun time*** of the year filled with parties, celebrations, social gatherings, and big events with family and friends.

For **many** people, it can have ***negative implications***.

Including: ***sadness, self-pity, loneliness, and anxiety***

**Suicide** nearly doubles

**A recent NBC/Prevention magazine holiday stress survey revealed that:**

---57% felt that they couldn't cope with all the things to do during the holidays

---30% felt that Christmas was the most stressful time of the year

---28% were stressed out over money issues during the holidays

---23% were so stressed that they couldn't even enjoy the holidays

When this ought to be one of the ***most joyous*** times of the year, it often is the ***most stressful*** time of the year.

### WHAT ARE SOME MAJOR CAUSES OF STRESS?

Sometimes it is **circumstantial**.      Triggered by Events

Sometimes it is **genetic**.              Personality

Sometimes its **biological**.              Chemical Imbalance. (Doesn't make sense.)

Often it is a learned **behavior**.              Environmental.

Some people ***rarely of never*** get depressed.

Others *rarely have a day* they don't have the blues.

## ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC CAUSES OF HOLIDAY DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY:

- **Pre-season overkill**
- **Stress**
- **Loneliness**
- **Unrealistic Expectations**

Expecting a magical Christmas

### What's Your Favorite Christmas Movie?

We see the movies...

My favorite – National Lampoon – Christmas Vacation

Man wanting to have the perfect Christmas

Struggling with his own weaknesses and the weaknesses of others...

Including wife, children, in-laws, annoying dogs and confused squirrel

"If I can just pull it off..."

- **Relationships.**

Relationships can cause turmoil, conflict or stress at any time.  
But tensions are often heightened during the holidays.

- **Disappointments**

As a little boy you look and think, "I can tell that's a basketball!" You open it up and it's a globe!

**Mary** experienced disappointment in the very first Christmas.  
She has been told, You're to bear the Messiah, the Son of God.

Joseph: "I've got some good news and some bad news. The good news is I found a place for us to stay...the bad news is..."

- **Grief/Negative Memories**

- **Financial Strains**

[I heard of a guy that went to a creditor and said, "We're having trouble with your easy payment plan. Do you have an easier one?"]

- **Guilt** – promoted by media, peers, and local culture (especially for kids)

- **Physical Stress...**

Added shopping...preparing...traveling...cleaning...decorating

Mary was nine months pregnant and she had to ride a donkey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Ca. 80 miles... "I'm so tired I could sleep in a barn..."

- **Dietary stress:**

More fast foods...

More candy and pastries

- **Decreased exposure to light – shorter daylight**

## ARE THERE SOME THINGS WE CAN DO TO MINIMIZE HOLIDAY STRESS?

### MANAGEMENT: CONTROLLING HOLIDAY STRESS

- Make **realistic expectations** for the holiday season.
  - If you don't get along with your sister during the year, don't expect to during Christmas.
- Set realistic **goals** for yourself.
  - Be realistic about what you can and cannot do.
- **Plan Ahead.**
  - Last minute shopping and cooking can make you feel resentful and overwhelmed.
- **Pace yourself.**
  - Do not take on more responsibilities than you can handle.
- **Make a list** and prioritize the important activities.

- This can help make holiday tasks more manageable.
- Do not put all your **energy** into just **one day** (i.e., Thanksgiving Day, New Year's Eve).
- **Live and enjoy the present.**
- **Look to the future with optimism.**
- Don't set yourself up for disappointment and sadness by **comparing today with the good old days of the past.**
- If you are lonely, try **volunteering** some time to help others.
- Find holiday activities that are **free**, such as looking at **holiday decorations**; going window shopping without buying.
- Try something **new**.
  - Celebrate the holidays in a new way.
- Spend time with **supportive and caring people.**
- Reach out and **make new friends.**
- Make time to contact a **long lost friend** or relative.
- Make time for yourself!
  - Take a **15 minute vacation** alone.
- Let others **share the responsibilities** of holiday tasks.
- Keep track of your holiday spending.
  - Over-spending can lead to depression when the bills arrive after the holidays are over.
  - Extra bills with little budget to pay them can lead to further stress and depression.
- Get into the light and fresh air.
- Eat Properly.
- Exercise.

## **SPECIFIC THINGS WE CAN DO AS CHRISTIANS?**

- **Practice giving thanks.**
- **Give the gift of forgiveness to those who have hurt you.**
- **Meditate on the blessings of God.**
- **Prioritize your Quiet Time.**
- **Find someone in Need and Serve**
- **Be Thankful**  
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
- **Share Your Faith**

**Next week: How to Successfully Share Your Faith Without Fear**  
–David Hoffman