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Holiday to Holiday Challenge



The Holidays: A Survival Guide

How to beat the BAH HUMBUGS...

The holiday season is upon us- joy to the world and fa la la. But while most of the world may be decking the halls with boughs of holly, some of you may be feeling a whole lot less than jolly. In fact, some of you may be feeling downright sad, angry and anxious during this holiday season. If you are, rest assured you're not alone and you're definitely not flawed as a human being.

Feeling low and sad during this time of year is perfectly normal. There are impossible expectations to meet and pressures to be people we no longer are or simply never were. It's a time to feel conflicted over traveling to see people we may love, but don't necessarily like; to feel guilty over spending money we don't have; eating food that's not healthy for us; and indulging in alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. In short, the holidays can be a minefield of uncomfortable emotions and unhealthy behaviors.

Recently, I was discussing this phenomenon with a smart, successful and incredibly loving man. He summed up his feelings for the holidays by stating simply, "I hate them." When asked why, he explained, "I feel so alone and like an outsider. I'll go home to visit my parents and after the first day my father and I will be at each other's throats. My mother will get drunk and I'll gorge myself with food." The good news in all of this was that he was able to be honest about his feelings.

Like anything that's not working in our lives, the first step toward finding a solution is to get a clear understanding about what's really going on. Until we admit and accept there's a problem, we will remain trapped in it.

In addition to admitting the truth, there are several other steps you can take to help you navigate the numerous challenges presented by the holiday season:

FIVE SIMPLE STEPS TO SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS

1. Don't hate yourself for hating the holidays. Feeling guilty about how you really feel about the holidays only serves to give the negative feelings more destructive power.

2. The best way to manage uncomfortable feelings is to acknowledge and accept they exist and set boundaries around the behavior and events that make you uncomfortable (e.g. set spending limits, create an eating and drinking plan, and limit or eliminate the time you'll spend with people who make you feel lousy).

3. Remember you don't need to like your family. It's completely normal and appropriate for you to *love* them, but not like who they are, how they live their lives, or how they treat or treated you. Once you acknowledge and accept this fact, your relationship with them will improve considerably.

4. Instead of focusing all your energy on what you dislike about the holidays, come up with traditions and rituals that are significant and meaningful to you (e.g. walking in the woods, listening to holiday music, spending time with friends who nurture and support you on your life's journey).

5. Put aside a few minutes each day between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day to write down 5 things for which you are grateful. It doesn't matter if they repeat and they can be as simple as your first cup of coffee in the morning. The key is to focus and embrace what's positive in your life.

By following these 5 simple steps, you can begin to experience the holidays in an honest light. Through the clarity that will be generated from this more honest vision, you can see the holidays as they are – not as you or others want them to be.

Posted by Paul Hokemeyer, Phd on Dr Oz's website, www.doctoroz.com.