



Don't Limit your Challenges
- Challenge your limits



BEATING THE POST HOLIDAY BLUES

"Is that all there is?"

Brenda Lee

It's time to take down the Christmas lights, pack away the holiday decorations and dispose of the Christmas tree. Suddenly the warm feelings of excitement and expectation are gone and replaced by feelings of depression and melancholy. Many people get the post-holiday blues. Psychologists even have a fancy name for it: post-reinforcement pause. What this actually means is - 'a slump' after all the fun and good stuff - going back to *'normal'* life.

There is a general apathy associated with after Christmas (holiday) blues as January looms. The short days and long cold nights, the inclement weather and waiting for the credit card statement or first bills of the New Year doesn't help matters. It's easy to let this get us down and have feelings of disappointment and boredom.

The first thing to understand is what you are feeling is normal, many of us around this time of year find ourselves struggling with post-holiday blues. The good news is, you are probably not suffering from an attack of depression. Therefore, the next thing to understand is that it will pass in a few days or weeks, if not sooner; in the meantime there are things you can do to help yourself to cope with the symptoms and maybe come through it more quickly.



Rather than allowing the feelings of apathy and lethargy take over, why not decide to take positive action -

Keep in Touch - during the holidays we see more of family and friends. We are constantly interacting so once it is over we can sometimes feel lonely. Make the decision to stay in touch. Regular phone calls to family and friends keeping up to date with news, arrange things with friends, meeting regularly for coffee / lunch, weekly or monthly, have an evening out.

Plan events or activities so you know there are some lovely things to look forward to.

Have a Party - Have friends / family over for an evening; don't always leave it to special occasions such as birthdays (although you can do it then too!). Book things into your diary

Play Music - Favourite or up beat music that keeps your spirits high and makes you feel good



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Holiday Snaps - whether you have a digital camera or are still battling with your little box brownie - get those photos developed. Put together an album that you can enjoy by yourself or with others. Make notes about the pictures remembering the special things; the laughter, what was said etc - don't leave them undeveloped gathering nothing but dust!

Go outside - I know it can be cold and wet, but getting out even for a short time can be exhilarating. Dress up against the weather and go for a brisk walk, enjoy nature and observe the signs that let you know spring is on the way - snowdrops, crocus and daffodils beginning to show through the ground; frogspawn and the wonderful blue sky that appears when strong winds have driven away the clouds

Try something new - new things keep us young, so what ever it is that you have always been meaning to do, - learn a musical instrument, write a book, join a choir, start to paint, look up an old friend etc - do it *now*

Have a clear out - create a clutter free environment! Clutter is things you no longer have a use for, but just keep, letting go of clutter will help you be more relaxed. Start today, and as you put things in the bin or ready to go to the charity shop you may feel a huge sense of sadness, guilt or relief. All of these feelings are normal and part of the process of 'letting go' of things you no longer need. You can be sentimental and selective at the same time; keep a few cherished things, whether they are items of clothing, or ornaments and put photos in an album keeping the best ones and letting the others go.

Relax - do something just for you everyday, take time to read, prepare a favourite meal, enjoy some quiet time, take a bath, visit a favourite place that uplifts your spirit, listen to music, keep a journal, meditate, etc

Keep the light - Brighten up your work and home, make sure it is light and airy, make maximum use of daylight and sunlight, and switch on lights when it becomes dusk outside.

At this time of year some of us suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

*Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD is a form of depression that occurs mostly during the winter months, when days are shorter and sunlight is lessened. This depression is often accompanied by general sluggishness, irritability, weight gain, carbohydrate craving, lack of libido, and sleeping more than usual. If you suffer with SAD, as well as the above consider the following -

Exercise regularly - it reduces stress and strengthens the immune system - if the gym, jogging or that type of physical energy isn't your thing then do something else, - cooking cleaning, dancing (even around the house!). Keep your mind active, crossword puzzles, jigsaws and games

Share feelings with family and friends - Don't view depression as something that is taboo. Many people experience it at some point in their lives - it's good to talk



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Get enough sleep – accept that you may need more sleep at this time of year (millions of hibernating animals can't be wrong!), make sure you don't have too many late nights

Eat sensibly – eat a balanced diet with a mix of protein and carbohydrates and watch out for heavy carbohydrates that make you tired – keep healthy snacks prepared so you are not tempted to binge eat on the wrong food when you get an attack of the 'munchies'

Don't drink alcohol in excess – although in small quantities alcohol can briefly lift mood, if taken in larger quantities it can act as a depressant. It can also act as a stimulant so whilst in the first instance you may fall asleep, excess alcohol can disrupt sleep pattern. Use in moderation if at all.

The holidays may be over but with a little effort the Christmas spirit can be with us all the year round. Family, friends, joy, laughter, goodwill, these things exist in us all - for all time. Keeping sight of them when Christmas is over will ensure we eagerly look forward to a New Year full of passion and enthusiasm. You *can* beat those post holiday blues, by adopting some of the above suggestions; choose the ones that you know will fit in with you and your life. Above all the one thing we can all do –

LAUGH - Laughter boosts endorphins, endorphins lift depression. Gleeful laughter helps strengthen the immune system, muscles, the respiratory system, the central nervous system, and the cardiovascular system.

"Twenty seconds of laughter can double the heart rate during that time period, just like jumping on an exercise bike."

Dr. William Fry, a Stanford University psychiatrist

So when you are feeling low and can't seem to shake it off – flex your funny bone and laugh – it will help.

** If you believe you are suffering from any form of depression it is important to consult your doctor or other qualified health professional. Although self-diagnosis seems easy, other conditions can be similar to SAD and they need to be eliminated before a SAD diagnosis is made.*

