

TIPS ON HELPING YOUR TEENS THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

Let's Talk About...

Managing Holiday Stress and the Blues

Teens feel stress during the holidays, too.

Many adults feel stressed out or get the blues during the winter holidays. But they don't always realize that teens get these feelings, too. The same things can cause these feelings for teens as they do for adults:

- Hectic schedule
- Financial stress
- Increased family conflict or misunderstanding
- Crowds
- Pressure to live up to idealized images of holidays and family life
- Changes in diet and routines
- Cabin fever
- Pressure to find the perfect gifts
- Not getting the gifts you wanted
- Other unmet expectations
- Increased grief about divorce, death, or other family changes (see below)
- Shortened amount of daylight (a cause of serious depression for many¹)

Also, many teens feel empty because holidays are not the same as when they were young kids. All on top of the normal stresses of growing up!

Feeling stressed or getting the blues during the holidays is normal. Some simple steps can help ease the feelings for your teen and get them through the season.

Help your teens manage their feelings. Encourage them...

- ***To talk.*** Help them express their feelings. Really listen to them. Try not to judge them or overreact. Instead, help them try to solve their problems. Encourage them to talk to other trusted adults or friends, too.
- ***To take a break.*** Getting away from others can be refreshing. Encourage them to spend time relaxing or doing an activity for themselves. Just spending a few minutes outside can re-energize them.
- ***To exercise.*** This is one of the best ways to work off stress.
- ***To eat right.*** Holidays often come with sugary and high-fat foods. Eating some is fine, but eating too much will only make mood swings worse.
- ***To do something charitable.*** It can be easy to lose sight of what the holidays are really about. Doing something for someone else can help change one's outlook.

Manage your own stress and blues, too.

- If you are feeling stressed or sad yourself, your children may be picking up on your feelings. You can help them by taking care of yourself. Plus, they learn from watching you. If you handle your feelings well, they will learn to handle their own feelings better.

In addition to the steps above...

- ***Cut back on your schedule.*** Learn to say no to some activities.
- ***Plan ahead.*** Be realistic and prioritize. Allow extra time, in case things don't go as planned.
- ***Work out schedules together, as a family.*** Give everyone a chance to express what they want. Be clear about your expectations of each other. Try to schedule some time apart, too.
- ***Set a holiday budget and stick to it.*** Show your teens how to manage their money during the holidays, as well.
- ***Put aside differences with friends or family members for the holidays.*** Don't stuff your feelings. Just wait for a better time to try to work things out.
- ***Let go of ideas of perfection.*** Try to enjoy things as they are, not as you think they should be.
- ***Limit your alcohol use.*** Drinking too much will only increase feelings of sadness or anxiety. Let your children see that you can celebrate without alcohol. Also, be aware that teens may be under more peer pressure to drink during the holidays. They take their cues from you

Divorce, death, and other family changes and the holidays

The holidays can be very difficult for anyone touched by death, divorce, or other major family changes. This is especially true for kids and teens. They may have to split time between two households or spend time with new stepparents or siblings. There may be unfamiliar routines. There may be many painful reminders of the past. There is also an extra focus on cheerfulness and family togetherness. All these can increase sadness and stress.

If your family has gone through a change recently, it is even more important to encourage your teens to talk about their feelings. Let them know that their feelings are normal. Remind them that, over time, things will get easier. But for now, they need all the support they can get. Give them permission to skip some activities that are too painful. You may want to start a new family tradition, as a way of making a new start.

More Resources:

Mayo Clinic

[Coping with the holidays: 12 tips to manage stress and the blues](#)

[Grief and the holidays: Coping on your own terms](#)

National Mental Health Association
[Holiday Depression & Stress](#)

KidsHealth
(Nemours Foundation)
For Teens:
[Dealing with Holiday Stress](#)

For Kids:
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
[Helping Teenagers with Stress](#)

1 Health News Digest. Shorter Days Trigger Depressive Disorder Among 10 Million Americans.