

## **The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns**

Contact: John Lough    email: [ACAcornet@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcornet@counseling.org)

### **Getting Through The Holidays Intact**

from the American Counseling Association

Ask people what the holiday season means to them and odds are good you'll get a wide range of answers. For some it's their favorite time of the year. For others it can be a season of sadness and feelings of loss. It is not unusual to find that many people find themselves feeling anxious, stressed and even depressed as the holiday season approaches.

That can be especially true if you have faced a loss in recent times -- the death of a family member, the end of a romantic relationship or any of the numerous happenings that can throw our lives a little off track.

If you find yourself facing such emotions during this season, especially depression, there are things you can and should do to combat such feelings and to keep yourself on an even keel.

A good starting point is to keep your life as regular as usual. It's not a time to stop exercising, to skip on the things you regularly do and enjoy, or to ignore a healthy diet.

An important part of that is not to give in to the excesses in food and alcohol that the season brings, and the guilt which always follows. Enjoy holiday parties, food and drink, but do so in moderation.

You also don't have to live up to other people's expectations. You have the power to not be affected by the pressures of the season. If you don't wish to attend a holiday event you know will only bring you down, feel free to say "no." You don't have to agree to every favor asked of you.

That doesn't mean, however, that you want to isolate yourself during the holidays. An important way to fight depression is to stay in touch with your regular friends and colleagues, and to maintain regular activities. Stay active by choosing friends and social situations you know you will enjoy.

The bottom line is to be good to yourself. If you're feeling blue, find ways to pamper yourself, to do things you want to do and that make you feel good. And be realistic, knowing that all the "perfect" holiday hype you see isn't the real world.

If you find the holiday season is making you truly blue and depressed, ask for help. A trained professional counselor can offer a variety of assistance to assist you in making the best of the season.

*Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcornet@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcornet@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).*

###

words: 400