Tips for Beating the Holiday BLUES  Contributed by Patrick Rice, MA, LMHC, CEAP

If you’re feeling a little conflicted about the upcoming holidays, you’re not alone.

Along with all the holly and the jolly comes a mixed bag of emotional issues for some – increased anxiety and stress, or a sense of loss and sadness, along with the feeling of isolation that occurs when everyone else seems to be having a great time. The good news is that this is a highly recognized problem, and there are several ways to make the holidays more bearable. Below are some tools to help you effectively work through this time of year, in case Santa brings you some holiday blues.

- **Keep your expectations balanced.** You won’t get everything you want, things will go wrong, and everything won’t be perfect. Keep this in perspective, and let go of what you can’t control.

- **Don’t try to do too much.** Fatigue, over scheduling, and taking on too many tasks can dampen your spirits. Learn to say no when necessary, even if it’s to your uncle’s famous potluck.

- **Don’t overspend!** It’s easy to feel like you have to buy everything for everyone, but those after season bills can really kill the holiday spirit.

- **Consider reaching out to help others.** Volunteering can help bring a purpose to a time that might otherwise feel purposeless.

- **Enjoy the sunshine!** Short days and bad weather can lead to increased feelings of depression, so do your best to counteract this effect by getting sunlight whenever possible.

- **Eat healthy and exercise when you can.** Taking care of your body and avoiding too many sweets can go a long way to helping your brain fight the blues.

- **Practice being okay with whatever it is you’re feeling.** If you don’t want to be happy, don’t be happy; if you have lost loved ones at Christmas, give yourself space to mourn. Honoring what’s inside can help you beat the expectations coming from the outside.

- **Don’t be afraid to make your own traditions.** Give the season its own meaning, and give yourself something to look forward to next holiday season.

- **Consider the blessings you do have.** Taking stock of all of the positives in your life can go a long way toward ending a “bah humbug” mood. With a little bit of planning and forethought, the holidays can be wonderful—and not because they are supposed to be.
The Power of Silence
Life Advantages - Author Delvina Miremadi

How Avoiding Certain Subjects Can Help You Get Ahead
If your work environment seems intimate, that's because it probably is. You spend 40 hours or more a week with your coworkers, and in that time you may talk about the Sunday football game, how their children are, or where you are going on vacation. However, no matter how close you may feel about your coworkers, it's still prudent to avoid certain topics in the workplace. Knowing when to excuse yourself from a conversation is a valuable skill, and knowing when to say nothing at all can help protect your professional reputation.

Topics to Avoid in the Workplace
Political or personal disagreements can raise the stress level of everyone involved in the disagreement and those witnessing the disagreement. In order to keep your workplace as stress-free as possible, avoid responding to these issues:
• giving your opinion about controversial social issues, religious beliefs, or political issues
• when you are asked to take sides in personal disputes among coworkers

Topics to Avoid in Public
When in public, it's best to not mention:
• a person's work performance
• your feelings about company policy, especially if they are negative
• conflicts between you and supervisors
• personal issues that coworkers have shared with you
• anything that has been discussed with you in private, unless you would break the law or company policy by keeping quiet

By knowing when not to communicate, you'll lead by example. Your coworkers will see that you make wise choices by saying nothing when it's appropriate, and they'll continue to see you as someone that they can trust and connect with.

Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Cookies
Contributed by Jaime Carter-Seibert, MA, LMHC

Try a new fall recipe!

Wet Ingredients
• ½ cup butter
• 1 ½ sugar
• 1 egg
• 1 cup pumpkin
• 1 teaspoon vanilla

Dry Ingredients
• 2 ½ cups flour
• 1 teaspoon baking powder
• 1 teaspoon baking soda
• ½ teaspoon salt
• 1 teaspoon nutmeg
• 1 teaspoon cinnamon
• 1 cup chocolate chips
• ½ cups nuts (optional)

Directions
1. Preheat oven to 350.
2. Grease cookie sheet with baking spray or butter.
3. Use hand mixer to cream butter and sugar.
4. Add remaining wet ingredients to butter/sugar and mix well.
5. Slowly add all dry ingredients until completely incorporated.
7. Use 2 tablespoons to drop dough onto prepared cookie sheet.
8. Bake about 12 minutes until golden brown.

IF YOU NEED EXTRA HELP
Call the First Choice Health Employee Assistance Program
(800) 777-4114