

Feeling sad? Here's how to beat the holiday blues

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(HealthDay)—The holiday blues might be a common phenomenon, but

there's plenty you can do to protect your mental health this time of year.

Even in a tumultuous year like 2017.

"With its combination of natural and human disasters, this year was especially traumatic for many people," said Dr. Richard Catanzaro, chief of psychiatry at Northern Westchester Hospital in Mount Kisco, N.Y.

In addition, "social media can make it seem like everyone you know is having the best time of their lives, while what you're really seeing is everyone's 'greatest hits,' " he said in a hospital news release.

"This adds to the pressure many people feel to have a good time during the holidays. If they are not enjoying themselves, they may feel out of step with everyone else," Catanzaro said.

Along with causing and intensifying depression and anxiety, the [holiday](#) season can trigger sadness about relatives and friends who are no longer alive, feelings of exhaustion and stress about money, he noted.

What to do? Catanzaro suggests taking preventive steps.

- "Be mindful about how you are feeling," Catanzaro said. "Holidays can trigger sad memories and may always be tinged with sadness if you have lost a loved one. Even if you are not in the mood to be festive, try to engage in other activities, and spend time with friends."
- At family gatherings, avoid politics and other controversial topics that could stir up negative feelings.
- Try to see people in person or talk to them on the phone, rather than using [social media](#).
- Get enough sleep and eat and drink in moderation.
- "Consider volunteering," Catanzaro said. "Doing something for

others who are less fortunate will keep things in perspective and give you a sense of purpose."

If you do feel depressed, don't isolate yourself, Catanzaro said. If you're already seeing a therapist, be sure to continue over the holidays—and if you're not seeing a therapist, consider seeking help.

Also, if you know or suspect you have a condition called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)—a form of depression that occurs in the winter months due to less daylight—there are effective treatments such as light therapy, psychotherapy and medications.

More information: The National Alliance on Mental Illness has more on [beating the holiday blues](#).

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