



**Intraspectus Learning Series**

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**Article By: Jeffrey P. Kerekes, MSSW, LCSW**

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## **The Holiday Blues**

It's that time of the year again when we are reminded of what each holiday can or can not bring. Will you be trekking across the country to see estranged family for only a few hours or will you be sitting in front of the television watching re-runs? Does nostalgia take hold when those good old days with loved ones come to mind?

For some of us feeling the Holiday Blues, the situation is compounded when we are told to be happy or at least act it by those around us. If you don't act or even dress the part, the social consequences can be hard to take.

### ***Bringing Things Down***

Holiday Blues can result from:

- Not having others with which to celebrate
- Family discord
- Holidays are times when people remember deceased loved ones
- Holidays serve as "Anniversaries" against which people measure things from their past such as the years they have been divorced
- There is a body of literature suggesting changes in the weather has an effect on one's mood. The Holidays coincide with the onset of cooler and darker weather

### ***Happier Days***

The good news is that depression is highly treatable. Research demonstrates that treatment is more effective than no treatment (waiting things out). This means you do not need to continue suffering. Therapy helps you to identify the root causes of unhappiness and facilitates a process by which you can identify and work towards goals to improve your mood and happiness. Another effective treatment option includes antidepressant medication.

Besides therapy, there are other tangible things you can do to make the holidays more enjoyable.

### ***Broaden Your Family***

If someone you know does not have their own family to celebrate the holidays, consider inviting them along to your family gathering. This can go a long way to help someone as we are

### ***S.I.G.E.C.A.P.S.***

The major symptoms of depression are represented by the mnemonic SIGECAPS. Any credits?

**S** – Sleep – An increase in the number of hours of sleep or insomnia can also be symptomatic

**I** – Interest – Loss of interest in activities one previously found enjoyable

**G** – Guilt & Self Esteem – Persistent feelings of guilt or poor self esteem

**E** – Energy – A recent change in your energy levels such as feeling tired all the time

**C** – Concentration – Poor concentration

**A** – Appetite – Eating to make yourself feel better or a loss of appetite

**P** – Psychomotor

Agitation/Retardation – Restlessness, pacing or speaking/moving slowly

**S** – Suicidality – Having thoughts to hurt or kill oneself or others

fundamentally social creatures and like to feel included. While this is not the case with everyone, it is not surprisingly true for most people. If you are someone who does not have a family, you can take the matter into your own hands and start your own family of “people without families” to celebrate the Holidays. You can begin inviting people from the circles you travel in such as work, your religious institution or start a Meet-up group (<http://www.meetup.com/>).

### ***Holiday Blues Jujitsu***

Kick the Holiday Blues’ gluteus maximus with some exercise. Whether or not you choose martial arts is up to you, but regular weekly exercise can do wonders for your depression. Even if you start a daily walk, getting some exercise can make a big difference.

### ***The Power of Meaning***

Don’t under estimate the role and importance of meaning. Doing something that has purpose can help you organize and prioritize your life, set goals, make plans and take action. If you find your actions lacking in meaning, try volunteering and setting aside time during the holidays to reflect. Working with a therapist around a sense of meaning can guide you in your journey.

### ***Learn More About “The Blues”***

Depression effects people in different ways and degrees. While it is best to have depression diagnosed by a psychotherapist or physician, you can participate in online depression screening (<http://www.depression-screening.org/>, or <http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org/>) or read more about depression ([http://my.webmd.com/medical\\_information/condition\\_centers/depression/default.htm](http://my.webmd.com/medical_information/condition_centers/depression/default.htm)).