



# Holiday blues?

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Anxious? Stressed? Depressed? At **The Montreal Center for Anxiety and Depression** we are getting a lot of calls of this nature- typical for this time of year. The holiday season is almost upon us... and the pressure is on. Why? Holidays have a built in expectation of family, connection and good times. This expectation can bring on stress and anxiety, if not loneliness and sadness. We especially are susceptible to these feelings when we feel we are not experiencing the perfect holiday "fantasy" life. Those TV shows and movies of happy "perfect" moments add to the sense that everyone else is experiencing what we feel we lack. This is an illusion. They really are TV shows and movies. In reality- we are not alone in feeling these challenging emotions (though we often feel we are which contributes a lot to the bad feelings).

Here are some simple tips and strategies that can help you combat any feelings of overwhelming stress, anxiety or sadness. Firstly validate it; it does make sense. Holidays can be challenging in so many ways. Old family hurts may arise, we tend to be reminded of people we have lost touch with or lost all together, plus we can easily get out of balance with our healthy habits. On top of all that holidays are expensive – a big stressor in itself. These pressures can easily trigger a stress response so acknowledging that "it makes sense" the way you are feeling will help you enormously. 2ndly remind yourself that you are not alone- there is comfort in knowing that we all struggle at times with the "negative emotions" we all dread. Anxiety is one of the most common challenges Canadians struggle with and yet so very treatable which leads to the 3rd strategy: Get help if you need it. At the Montreal Center for Anxiety and Depression we have trained specialists who can make a huge difference in your life with simple but effective tools.

Both anxiety and depression respond so well to treatment and yet tend to get worse if not dealt with. Research online or ask others for referrals for who you would like to work with and consider taking the step to call for help if you are finding it overwhelming with to deal with these feelings alone. Asking for help is a sign of courage not weakness.

In day to day operations consider trying these very simple but effective strategies:

When you have thoughts of panic, anxiety or worry try this simple but effective strategy: Make a self-statement something like this "STOP! These thoughts are not helpful and I have decided to think differently." (Each time you do this you are reinforcing your brain to think in a more positive way)

Remember anxiety is not dangerous -it is just uncomfortable

**EXERCISE...** Exercise relieves stress as well as relieving depressed feelings

Get enough sleep. Try not to drink alcohol or caffeinated beverages in the evening; take a warm bath one hour before bed; go to bed at the same time every night.

Listen to some music you like- this can soothe the nerves as well as lifting the spirit.

Watch what you eat. A healthy diet can help you handle stress. Eat breakfast, cut back on caffeine, watch sugar intake, and stick to a regular meal schedule.

Take a breath from your belly: Abdominal breathing brings much needed oxygen in to the body and relaxes the muscles. It also slows down your heart rate and helps calm the mind

Talk it out: When you are stressed, a quick call to a friend can instantly make you feel better.

Make time for fun.

Come say hi to us at one of our upcoming talks.

In the meanwhile- take a breath- all is well even if not perfect... Life is not perfect and THAT is perfectly fine.

*Sandra*