



BHS A.S.S.I.S.T.

Spotlight

December 2019

Your EAP is a free and confidential service, which provides assessment and short-term counseling for a variety of mental health, substance abuse and work/life related issues. To learn more about your available benefits, contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800.245.1150.



Tips for Fighting
Holiday Depression

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Plan Ahead & Save
this Holiday Season

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Making New
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Healthy Recipe:
Green Beans with Lemon
Almond Pesto

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Tips for Fighting Holiday Depression

As the holidays approach and another year comes to an end, many enter a period of reflection. Reflection can offer an opportunity to revel in the events of the year, or it can cause us to be consumed with self-doubt and regret. Fortunately, the challenges that come with managing depression during the holidays are not impossible.

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Identify the issue. While the signs and symptoms of depression can vary, there are some hallmarks that can alert you or those around you that you may be feeling a bit down.

- Fatigue
- Eating more or less
- Sleeping more or less
- Inability to concentrate
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Depressed mood most of the time
- Lack of interest in activities that you used to enjoy

One of the most important factors in identifying these changes is self-awareness. Do yourself a favor and take note of how you generally live your life. If you wake up one day in December and have a difficult time remembering the last time you did the things you enjoy, it might be a sign that you are not acting or feeling like yourself.

PREVENTING DEPRESSION

Depression is not impossible to overcome, but why fight an unnecessary battle? If you know that you might be prone to feeling a little down during this holiday season, plan your preemptive attack now!

Create a plan for your holiday.

Goals give you something to focus on and preoccupy your mind. So fill your mind with something exciting and productive this holiday. Not into the holiday jingles and twinkling lights? Dedicate a portion of your time to volunteer work or commit to catching up with old friends, and be accountable. Make some phone calls early in the season and get these appointments on your calendar.

Create new traditions.

Is this your first holiday away from your family? If so, change your focus from longing for holidays past to designing the footprint for your very own holiday traditions. Print up some nice invitations for your first annual holiday party, or book your first of many holiday vacations. Whatever you decide to do, take ownership and control over how your valuable downtime is spent, what is lacking in your life and what may need to be cut.

Utilize your resources.

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides free and confidential assessment and counseling services. If you are concerned about your mental health, don't hesitate to seek advice. Your BHS Care Coordinator is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 800-245-1150.



Plan Ahead to Save this Holiday Season

Planning ahead can help alleviate some of the stress that accompanies this very exciting, but busy, time of the year. When you have enough money saved in the bank, giving gifts is a much more enjoyable experience all around. You can concentrate on getting the right gift for that special family member or friend, as opposed to feeling overwhelmed by having to spend money you don't have.

- **Develop a budget and stick to it.** Write a list of everyone on your gift list and determine how much you want to spend on each person. You should also include costs for cards, postage, gift wrapping, holiday meals out, parties, travel, and any other miscellaneous items. Bring your list when you hit the stores, as it is easy to shop impulsively during this time of year.
- **Shorten your gift list.** Is it really necessary to buy everyone on your list a present? Consider sending a thoughtful holiday card or e-mail, or even writing a family newsletter to update everyone about the past year.
- **Get creative with your gift giving.** Handmade gifts and personalized coupons can be the most thoughtful gifts. Think about your own talents as well as what the person may need. For example, knit a blanket or sweater; bake some cookies; create a photo album of your favorite pictures; or give them a coupon for a special dinner at your house, babysitting time, or even a house cleaning!
- **Draw names.** If you belong to a big family or have many friends, suggest this idea so that each person has to buy only one gift.
- **Shop early and compare prices.** There are great bargains and sales to be found—even during this time of year. In the future, when you see a great gift for a family or friend during the year—buy it! This will save you time during the holidays and help you spread your spending throughout the year. Just don't forget to put your gifts in a safe place so you know where to find them when it's time to give them away!
- **Shop online.** It's fast, it's easy, and you can comparison shop! In addition, since you'll probably be ordering gifts from the comforts of your home, the temptation to eat out or to make unplanned purchases will be greatly reduced.
- **Save money.** Continue adding to your holiday fund each week. If your budget is tight, find ways to cut back on your daily spending (e.g., no morning latte, bring a lunch to work, give up your weekly movie, etc.), and put that extra cash toward gifts.
- **Pay off your credit card.** If you are planning to shop with a credit card, make sure you have enough in your bank account to pay off the amount at the end of the month. Also, consider using cards that offer extra incentives such as frequent flyer miles.
- **Donate more than cash.** Contact your favorite local charity and see if they take donations in other forms than just cash (e.g., canned goods, clothing, furniture, books, etc.).



Making New Holiday Traditions

Most of us look forward to spending time with friends and family during the holidays. Family dinners, game nights with friends, tree trimming parties and holiday movie marathons are a few of the traditions that fill our social calendars between Thanksgiving and the New Year.

Maybe your family is adding to existing traditions, or you're first time parents looking to build new ones. Perhaps you're newlyweds out to create new memories or a group of close friends who just want to bond. Whatever the case, here are some ideas that will up your anticipation for the holidays:

- **Choose a new ornament** that represents a special memory made during the year or simply brings your loved ones to mind.
- **Volunteering** is a holiday tradition that never goes out of style. Grab some friends, choose a cause and go make an impact.
- **Take holiday pictures** that can chronicle the growth and evolution of your family or friend group over time. Make it even more fun by wearing coordinated outfits!
- **Swap your favorite book with a loved one** who has great taste in literature. The bonus? You'll get a good read out of the deal, too.

- The holidays come alive with light shows! Grab the kids (young and old) and **take in the beauty of a light display**.
- Think you're the best baker or cook in your family? **Have an annual cook-off** to see who makes the best chocolate chip cookies or chili in the family.
- **Learn about the holiday traditions of a different culture**, or grow knowledge of your own. Make it fun by trying out a culturally related recipe or learning how to wish others "Happy Holidays!"

HEALTHY RECIPE:

Green Beans with Lemon-Almond Pesto

Cooking spray or olive oil mister, 1.5 lbs. green beans, trimmed, 1/2 cup almonds, 1 garlic clove, 1 tbsp. lemon juice, 1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, Salt & pepper to taste

- Preheat oven to 400°F
- Spray a rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray. Place beans on sheet in a single layer and spray tops with cooking spray. Roast for 15 minutes.
- Combine almonds, garlic, lemon juice, olive oil, salt & pepper in food processor and roughly chop. Spoon over green beans before serving.

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