

Ten Reasons for Difficult Holidays

We generally think of the holidays as a positive experience, the truth is they can be difficult for people suffering from depression and anxiety.

1. ***Routine is off:*** Structure and routine are good for anxiety and our circadian rhythm. This often disrupts our anxiety, sleep, and eating schedules.
2. ***Encouraged not to think of self, but others:*** Concern for others is good but we often abandon our self-care and maintenance in its pursuit.
3. ***Financial difficulties:*** We generally neglect our budgets but still feel anxious about it.
4. ***Winter Depression:*** It is a very dark time of year, this exacerbates seasonal depression, decreases vitamin D, and further disrupts circadian rhythm.
5. ***The “Grinch” Label:*** People with depression are chastised as being a “grinch” and may be told to simply, “Cheer Up!” minimizing their struggle.
6. ***Encouraged to embrace unhealthy family relationships/dynamics:*** The holidays pressure us to be around people to help maintain the illusion of unity and family, even when those dynamics may be unhealthy.
7. ***Reminds of losses:*** Grief can be exacerbated.
8. ***Frequently disappoints:*** The holidays rarely live up to exaggerated expectations.
9. ***Holiday denials:*** No one likes to admit they are struggling. Both to themselves and to others. It encourages us to be *less* in touch with ourselves.
10. ***Intermittent Reward System:*** The holidays produce a few awesome memories that we may feel pressured to over pursue.

It is okay to struggle through the holidays and not follow the program because sometimes conventional thought can be counter-productive to mental health.

If you're struggling...seek out those who will help you struggle well...instead of those who will encourage and pressure you to deny your struggling.