



For you

Handling loneliness during the holidays

'Tis the season to be jolly...or is it?

Being sad or lonely during the season of good cheer can make you feel isolated. Yet it's true that the holidays can stir up tough emotions.

Maybe you've just lost a loved one or ended a relationship. Maybe you've just changed jobs or moved to a new area — leaving friends behind. If you're lonely or sad, don't try to ignore your feelings. Try taking steps to cope.

Here are some suggestions:

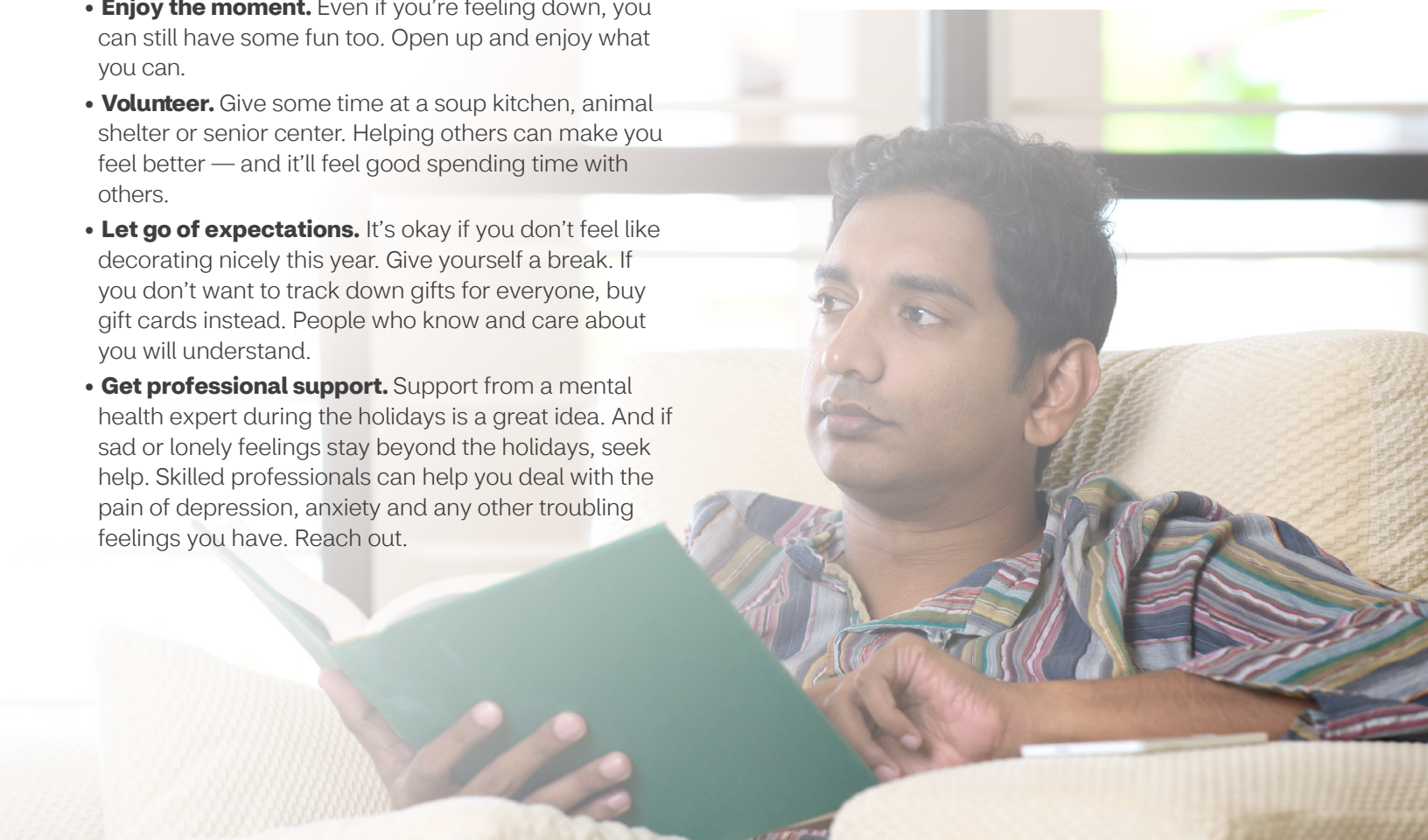
- **Be realistic.** Identify your feelings. You have to know that you may feel down in the weeks ahead. This will help you avoid getting caught off guard.

It can also help to stay away from holiday events that may cause you to feel worse. If you want to avoid the traditional events, start your own holiday tradition.

Remember: You get to write the script for yourself. Don't let old traditions control what you do.

- **Be gentle with yourself.** Don't try to be superhuman. If you start to feel sad, let yourself be and feel those emotions. Then try to get busy. A new project, book or other activity can help ease your heart.
- **De-stress.** What do you like to do to manage stress? Do things that feel safe and stress-free. Avoid overuse of alcohol and other substances to soothe yourself. They can make you feel depressed.
- **Ask for support and take it.** When someone offers help — whether it's a shoulder to cry on or a quiet dinner together — take it. It's important to lean on your support system.
- **Enjoy the moment.** Even if you're feeling down, you can still have some fun too. Open up and enjoy what you can.
- **Volunteer.** Give some time at a soup kitchen, animal shelter or senior center. Helping others can make you feel better — and it'll feel good spending time with others.
- **Let go of expectations.** It's okay if you don't feel like decorating nicely this year. Give yourself a break. If you don't want to track down gifts for everyone, buy gift cards instead. People who know and care about you will understand.
- **Get professional support.** Support from a mental health expert during the holidays is a great idea. And if sad or lonely feelings stay beyond the holidays, seek help. Skilled professionals can help you deal with the pain of depression, anxiety and any other troubling feelings you have. Reach out.

The holiday season will pass. Don't beat yourself up about avoiding the hype this year. Let's help you through this season. Call us anytime.



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