

How to weather the holidays when you're alone



You may have lost a loved one, or are newly divorced. Or you may be a single parent or have no close family to connect with. Facing the holidays without support may fill you with feelings of sadness, loneliness and tension. Images of happy families sitting by the fireplace, singing holiday songs may only add to your pain.

Coping with the season

You can survive the holidays by making a few changes. Try rethinking your priorities and determine what is really meaningful to you during this season. For starters:

- Decide if you will stay home for the holidays or choose to get away to a different place this year.
- Determine if you can take on hosting a family dinner or holiday party. Be honest with yourself. What toll might this take on you?
- Maintain family traditions if they still work for you, but also think about creating new traditions that might have more meaning for your current situation.
- Set aside some time to satisfy your own needs—such as a long walk, lunch with a close friend or just listening to music.

Turn the page for helpful holiday survival tips to use in special situations.



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Holiday spirit-lifters



Holiday support for single parents

- Discuss and plan children's visits and gift giving with your former partner well ahead of the holiday season.
- Simplify holiday celebrations and involve your children in holiday planning when you can.
- Plan celebrations with friends and with other single-parent families if you will not be with your children or your extended family for the holidays.

Dealing with holidays following the death of a loved one

- Let others take over holiday tasks such as cooking or decorating the house.
- Donate money you would have spent on your loved one's gift to a particular charity.
- Reflect on pleasant memories and set aside time to grieve.
- Lean on available resources including family, your religious community or a support group.

Help when there are no close family ties

- Seek out friendships to create a surrogate family of friends.
- Gather with your friends for holiday dinners and other celebrations.
- Make it a point to call your friends and send cards, not just during the holidays, but all year long to reinforce the feeling of family.

Coping with holidays after divorce

- Think about new traditions you would like to start with family members or friends.
- Be thankful for the ones in your life and focus on the good things you have together.
- Open your mind to the possibility that things don't have to be a certain way during the holidays for you to be happy. Try to stay positive and look forward.

Find additional supportive advice from the Personal Health Manager's *Ask A Life Coach* feature. This is one of the many health and wellness resources available online through Blue Access[®] for Members.