

How to Survive (and Thrive) During the Holidays When You Feel Alone

Christmas is a pretty merry holiday (and I'd imagine the non-Christian holidays are pretty festive too), and for me, it's always a time to count my blessings. I'm blessed with many things, but a loving family is top on my list.

However, there may be some of you who are going through these holidays without family, without anyone perhaps, and I know that can be extremely rough. This post is for you.

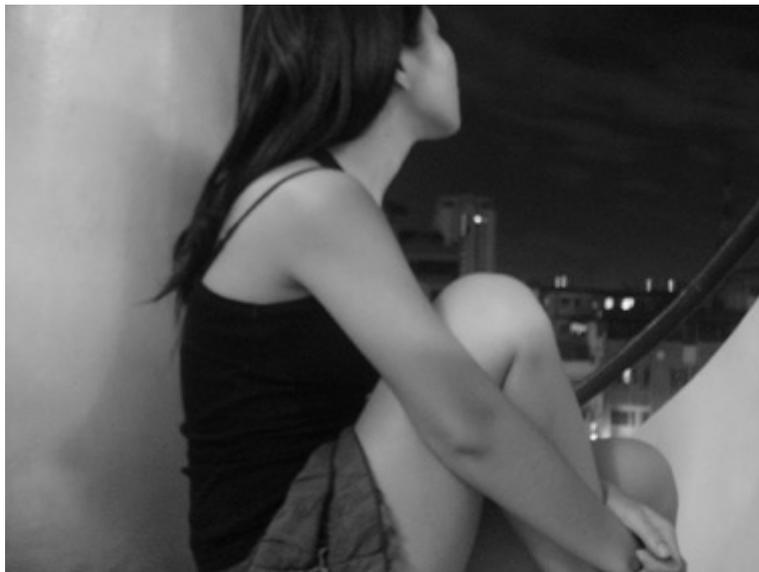


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While there are many ways to be happy by yourself, I think there's something about the holidays and the festiveness of it all that gets people down if they feel alone. For some, it's a real low point, so much so that depression can hit and times can get pretty dire.

I was thinking about those of you who are going through this during this holiday season, and my heart goes out to you. If this time of year is getting you down, and you feel alone, here are some suggestions for things to do.

As always, remember that I am not a professional, and that counseling or other professional help should be sought if things are very serious. These are just my tips, based on things that have worked for me in the past.

1. Seek family and friends. When we're feeling lonely, often the best comfort is the presence of loved ones. If possible, seek out their company, and spend some quality time with family and friends. Talk to them about your feelings ... I know it can be difficult to admit to loneliness, but talking to someone about it can truly help. If you have no one to talk to, seek out a hotline in your area or go to an online forum and anonymously tell people about your loneliness. You'll feel better for it.

2. Forgive. Sometimes what's stopping us from making connections with loved ones is the walls we put up ... perhaps we're holding a grudge or there's bad feelings about something that happened in the past. And the only thing keeping us from healing those wounds, and building that bridge, is pride and fear of rejection. So take the leap: throw pride aside, and jump through the wall of fear, and reach out to a loved one. Forgive them, in your heart, and just reach out. Make that connection. It's Christmas. Forgive.

3. Open yourself to meeting new people. Another thing that stops us from making those connections with people is that we put up walls between us and those we don't know intimately. Perhaps there are coworkers or classmates or other acquaintances that could be good friends, but we close ourselves off. Well, resolve to change that, if that's the case. Open yourself up, and be friendly, and reach out. Sure, it won't always work out, but it will never work out if you don't give it a shot.

- 4. Volunteer.** Nothing can remind us about the true spirit of Christmas as well as serving food to the less fortunate. It makes us realize how lucky we are, and we feel good that we are helping our fellow human beings. Take some time during the holidays to volunteer your time to a good cause, and in doing so not only give of yourself, but open yourself up to these fellow human beings. Then, if it's a great as I think it will be, continue that throughout the year.
- 5. Exercise.** You'll see this on many of my lists ... because it really works. Exercise is such a great way to lift your mood. I went running this morning, and it was just a beautiful start to my day. If you're feeling down, get out and get active. You don't need to hit the gym or go running ... play basketball, hit the batting cages, go hiking, anything that gets you active.
- 6. Pamper yourself.** Be Santa to yourself ... give yourself the gift of relaxation. Get a massage, or go to a spa, or just set a hot bath and drink some tea or cocoa. However you do it, find a soothing activity and environment and just enjoy yourself.
- 7. Be festive.** It may seem contrived, but if you act happy and merry, you probably will feel that way too. Get into the holiday mood, sing songs, decorate, celebrate in some way. With enough merriment in your life, you'll find it making its way into your heart as well.
- 8. Give.** Similar to volunteering, giving can give you a great feeling about yourself. Give to the needy, or to a neighbor, or to a child you know. Give to a good cause.
- 9. Avoid excessive alcohol.** Many people resort to drink this time of year. But instead of bringing the numbness they seek, it usually leads to worse depression. Some alcohol is fine, but keep things in moderation.
- 10. Keep things simple.** The holidays can be merry, but more often they're filled with more activities than we can handle. The holiday events add things to our regular to-do list that threaten to overwhelm. Instead, simplify your life during the holiday season (and keep it going into the New Year) and reduce instead of increase the amount of stuff you do. You will be less stressed and happier for it.
- 11. Spend time with single friends.** Sometimes it can be a real downer to hang around with your married friends and family. In addition, they are so focused on their family that they often don't focus on you. While you shouldn't shun your loved ones who have families or partners, it's a good idea to get together with the single friends in your life. Not only can you keep each other company during these tough times, but you can focus on each other more, share commonalities, and have a great time together.
- 12. Find and pursue your passion.** While many with families will work less during the holidays, you could try something different: work more. But don't just work for work's sake — do work that you love. Whether that's a project you're passionate about at your current job, or pursuing a passion outside your job in your off hours, pour yourself into work that you're passionate about. You may need to seek out that passion, and do some experimenting and soul searching, but that's the fun.
- 13. Hold a get-together yourself.** Don't wait to be invited — hold a get-together and invite those you'd like to talk to for a little while. Get creative with the food. Keep things simple. Play some great music and have a blast.
- 14. Focus on what makes you happy.** Perhaps the most important tip of all: instead of focusing on what you don't have, and thinking about what makes you sad and depressed ... focus on what you love. What makes you happy? If you focus on that, that will be your reality. Sounds corny? It is. But it works.

Author: Leo Babauta

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