

## AFTER THE HOLIDAYS

Sometimes when the holidays are over, we experience a letdown kind of sadness and depression. Visiting family has gone home, all of the gatherings are over, the decorations come down, and we are left with more time alone and more silence. In some ways, this may be a relief. In others, it may remind us that we are not being buffered from our feelings as we were when there were so many holiday distractions around. The holidays can often be followed by a period of exhaustion from so much socializing, overeating, and drinking.

As we move through these darkest, coldest, shortest days of the year, we also find ourselves indoors more, and this in itself can be depressing and lonely. There are some things we can do to make this time of year easier and prevent some of the post-holiday depression.

- Get outside during the day when the sun is out, even if it is just for a short walk. Mild exercise and sunlight help replenish our bodies and spirits.
- Make efforts to connect with people you enjoy and who can understand your experience. If you reconnected with someone over the holidays that you feel can support you well, let them know that you would like to continue having them in your life. Making lunch plans once or twice a month can keep you connected to the support system you have.
- Grief support groups offer you a chance to be with other people who have gone through death loss and who are having similar experiences. Even if you have never been "a group kind of person," support groups can provide invaluable information, support and comfort in discovering that you truly are not alone. Hospice offers a number of groups, as do many faith communities.
- Take time to send cards or letters to people you saw during the holidays or didn't get to see during the holidays. It will help remind you that you do have connections with others that will go on throughout the rest of the year.

The holidays may have brought up feelings that you thought you were through having or ones you didn't know you had. While it may be hard to sit still with the silence and feel the discomfort, it is often in this very silence and stillness that we rediscover the true depth of our sorrow and the true depth of our love.

