



## LAWYERS CONCERNED FOR LAWYERS

Confidential Support for Legal Professionals

### Managing Post-Holiday Blues

The holidays bring opportunities to connect and celebrate, though again we faced limits in a difficult year. Even so, we were surrounded by sounds and colors meant to brighten our mood and signal good things to come. Now the holidays are over, and the credit card bills will soon arrive. We may notice the effects of extra sugar. It is not uncommon to experience post-holiday blues. For some, this is a passing sadness but for others, signs of depression may continue.

These symptoms can be triggered by many things. If family came together over the holidays, we may feel lonely when they leave. Difficult relationships may be exacerbated and if we are estranged from someone, the hole seems larger. Feelings of grief, especially if the loss is recent or was traumatic, are magnified. If we have visited with older or ill relatives and friends we have not seen in a while the change can be significant, or we may believe we will not see them again. If it is your parent, you may realize that you will have to step in, and it will not be easy. We may also have unmet expectations, feel that we, or our gifts, are unappreciated and experience guilt because of the amount we spent or the amount we ate (or drank). COVID-19 changes and restrictions bring new emotions and exhaustion as we adapt yet again.

The holidays themselves may be the hardest for those who are grieving and facing other life difficulties. It may be a relief that the holidays are over.

Sometimes post-holiday blues are mitigated by resuming (or starting) healthier practices and engaging with things you are passionate about. After the busy holiday season, we have more time to take care of ourselves. If resolutions or goals start small, we are more likely to achieve them. Here are some ideas for winter self-care.

- Begin or continue a gratitude practice. Research shows that a daily journal or mindful gratitude practice can increase overall life satisfaction. <https://www.healthline.com/health/benefits-of-gratitude-practice>.
- Relax. You have been rushing to get everything done, now take time to sit and enjoy that new book or piece of music. Think of other ways to bring mindfulness into your day. <https://www.mindfulnessinlawsociety.org/>.
- Say no (or yes) with intention. Wait before agreeing to something new. Can

you do it well? Is it right for you?

- Think of your physical health -- moving, eating, sleeping, and hydrating. Resolutions work for some, but we might feel worse if we set unmanageable ones. If we stopped or lessened healthy practices during the holidays, that *is not* the new normal. If trying to do things on your own has not worked, consider well-researched plans and programs. This goes for alcohol consumption as well, LCL can help.
- Reframe. Yes, these early months are cold. Think of what is beautiful, not the short days. Notice and appreciate the beauty of sparkling snow and get outside. Use sunlight lamps and other seasonal supports as needed.

For some, this may not be enough. Symptoms that there is a bigger problem can include difficulty eating, sleeping, or concentrating. The things that normally bring enjoyment do not. A sense of emptiness can surround us, and the world seems gray and heavy. Then it is time to ask for help.

Here are some links discussing symptoms and resources.

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/how-to-manage-post-holiday-depression>

<https://chopra.com/articles/6-ways-to-beat-the-post-holiday-blues>

<https://www.thehealthy.com/mental-health/post-holiday-blues/>

The Lawyers Depression Project offers resources and an on-line forum at <https://www.knowtime.com/>. Another good resource about depression is [www.lawyerswithdepression.com](http://www.lawyerswithdepression.com).

A related source of winter blues is seasonal depression, formerly known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD). It is triggered, in part, by access to less natural light. In general, light therapy or increased vitamin D may be helpful, the sooner, the better. Here are resources to learn more:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/seasonal-affective-disorder/DS00195>

<https://nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions/Depression/Major-Depressive-Disorder-with-a-Seasonal-Pattern>

You may contact LCL for help and referrals to counselors through LCL's counseling partner, The Sand Creek Group. Up to four free and confidential counseling sessions are available to lawyers, law students, judges, staff who work on legal matters, and immediate family members. Sand Creek's website, [www.sandcreekeap.com](http://www.sandcreekeap.com), includes many resources on issues ranging from stress to mental health to alcohol, drugs, and compulsive behaviors as well as a variety of coping and wellness topics. Click on "MEMBER PORTAL AND APP" to create your free and confidential account. Then click on "SIGN UP" and use the Company Code "lawyers."