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Century Park ASSOCIATES

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

Some of the common symptoms of depression in older individuals include persistent sadness, withdrawal from social activities, slowed thinking, lack of energy, lack of interest in things that were once pleasurable, excessive worry, frequent tearfulness, feelings of worthlessness or helplessness, weight changes, changes in sleep patterns and concentration problems.

Recognizing depression in older individuals can be difficult because often older individuals have a difficult time describing how they are feeling. In addition, depression is a diagnosis that was not available when these individuals were coming of age, and thus the illness is not understood as a biological illness. Rather, these individuals might feel like expressing depression is a character weakness.

CAUSES FOR HOLIDAY DEPRESSION

There are many reasons that the holidays may affect older individuals negatively. For instance, they may be more aware of the passing of time and the absence of parents, siblings and friends who have died, financial limitations, loss of independence, being separated from family and friends or loss of mobility.

In addition, traditions that were observed in the past may not be possible for a variety of reasons including death, illness, and injury. With the absence of these traditions, a holiday's meaning for those impacted can change. Everyone feels sad on occasion, but the holidays may stir some feelings of separation; however, many individuals will recover as the holidays pass. Depression is different because it causes individuals to be unable to continue to function in their everyday lives.

COPING WITH DEPRESSION CAUSED BY GRIEVING A LOVED ONE'S PASSING

- Place the person's picture in a place of prominence in your apartment.
- Place a battery-operated memorial candle in a special place in your apartment.
- Make a photo album of previous holidays together to focus on positive memories.
- Set aside a time so that your loved ones who wants to can share a favorite memory or a funny story about the deceased.
 - Toast to your loved one with family or friends.
 - Go to church or a synagogue.
 - Volunteer to help those in need.
 - Visit your loved one's final resting place or a location where they enjoyed spending time.

COPING WITH DEPRESSION CAUSED BY FINANCIAL PRESSURES

- Remind your loved ones that less expensive gifts can be just as thoughtful and useful as pricier ones.
 - Make baked goods or create handcrafted gifts for your family and friends.
- Have your family members agree on a dollar limit for gifts and/or set up a gift exchange. Drawing one or two names of people to shop for is much more reasonable than having everyone buy presents for each other. This may help others save money as well.
- Don't wait until the last minute to mail cards, go shopping or wrap gifts. Take care of a few items each day to complete tasks with
 minimal stress and expense.

HOW TO AVOID HOLIDAY DEPRESSION

- Keep a regular schedule and build in breaks. Adequate physical and mental rest is crucial, especially during the hectic holiday season.
 - Do not feel guilty for picking and choosing which holiday plans you can commit to.
- With the many holiday festivities happening around you, don't be afraid to try something new, you might just find you have a hidden talent or pleasure that can become part of your normal daily routine.
- Make sure you get regular exercise. Unfortunately, it's typical for people to stop doing the healthy things they usually do
 because of holiday activities and the inclement weather. Make exercise and other forms of self-care a top priority, even if it's
 only twenty minutes each day.
- Avoid overeating at every meal. Save indulging for special meals, like your big holiday family dinner. Balancing indulgence
 with light, healthy meals will help you to feel less lethargic and prevent digestive issues.

