

Relationship Advice: Kinds of People Most Likely to Get the Holiday Blues



By Dr. Sanam Hafeez

With the holidays upon us, it's easy for us to get caught up in the rush of it all. While we may be cooking, shopping, enjoying holiday events, there are others – many of whom are in our very own circles – having a tougher time. [Relationship expert](#) Dr. Sanam Hafeez, a NYC based licensed clinical psychologist, teaching faculty member at Columbia University Teacher's College and the founder and Clinical Director of Comprehensive Consultation Psychological Services, reveals who are most likely to have the holiday blues, and how we can help them make it through.

If you think somebody in your life could be affected by the holiday blues, check out Dr. Hafeez's [relationship advice](#) below to help better understand your loved ones this season.

1. The newly divorced or widowed: Loss is a sad, life-changing event at any time of the year. However, it tends to be harder when everyone around you is joyful celebrating the holiday's and you feel it's an effort to get out of bed. If someone in your circles is going through a major loss and life transition, be supportive and understanding. "They are grieving and mourning and are especially sensitive around the holidays. It's important that they feel included but don't be offended if they choose to opt out of certain events," advises Dr. Hafeez. She suggests checking in and offering them the option to participate in whatever they want, when they want. Love them through it.

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2. The busy entrepreneur: The holidays could be stressful for small business owners because so much rides on the end of year. They may be fretting over their profits (or lack thereof), the goals they didn't reach, and the many things still to do. They feel overwhelmed and when they are expected to shop, entertain and be present for their families, they may be short tempered and anxious. "The best way to help the busy entrepreneur is to make their life easier in any way possible. If they can't make it to a family dinner, tell them your door is open for dessert. Often times they feel guilty and obligated which only adds to their frustration," explains Dr.

Hafeez. Also consider that these worker-bees are conflicted. When they are working they miss their families and when they are with family they are thinking of work.

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3. The caretaker of an elder parent or relative: Adults who are now caretakers to their elderly parents are incredibly overwhelmed and often overlooked. As a caretaker, they always have to consider the well-being of their parent. They can't just get up and go," explains Dr. Hafeez. Caretakers may feel resentful, isolated and stuck during the holidays which leads to conflicted feelings of resentment and guilt. They also believe they have to be hands on managing everything. It's important to lighten the caretakers load by offering support; even if it means asking them how they are doing. Be patient and ask the caretaker what they need. It could be something as simple as having food delivered to their home to free up time for other tasks, Dr. Hafeez recommends.

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4. The recovering substance abuser: Recovering from addiction is hard. Period. It's harder when holiday festivities are filled with friends and family drinking everything from eggnog to champagne. "Understand that those in recovery from substance abuse are hyper-sensitive about being judged. They feel as if all eyes are on them and that pressure may trigger the desire to use drugs or alcohol to soothe their anxiety. When they aren't fully recovered, they may anticipate possible "landmines" and avoid them. They may choose to stay to themselves and observe more and participate less. They might opt out of larger family gatherings that are too overwhelming," cautions Dr. Hafeez. Offer an open invitation and remind them they are welcomed when they are ready. A balance of love, support and acceptance is what they are in

most need of, suggests Dr. Hafeez.

5. The children of divorce: Divorce means two separate holidays at two different places, and kids feel overwhelmed having to double up. It's incredibly important for parents to agree on where the kids are going during the holidays and all logistical details. "Kids want to feel safe and secure. They don't want to feel as if they are the expected to be rushed here and there because their parents chose to divorce," says Dr. Hafeez. It could be unsettling to younger kids, and teens may isolate and rebel against any family events as they are sorting out their own emotions as they get used to a new normal. You really want to establish a game plan for the holidays and if possible, stick to it every year, advises Dr. Hafeez.

Dr. Sanam Hafeez PsyD, is a NYC based licensed clinical psychologist, teaching faculty member at the prestigious Columbia University Teacher's College and the founder and Clinical Director of Comprehensive Consultation Psychological Services, P.C. a neuropsychological, developmental and educational center in Manhattan and Queens. She works with individuals who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), learning disabilities, attention and memory problems, and abuse. Dr. Hafeez often shares her credible expertise to various news outlets in New York City and frequently appears on CNN and Dr.Oz. Connect with her via Twitter @comprehendMind or www.comprehendthemind.com