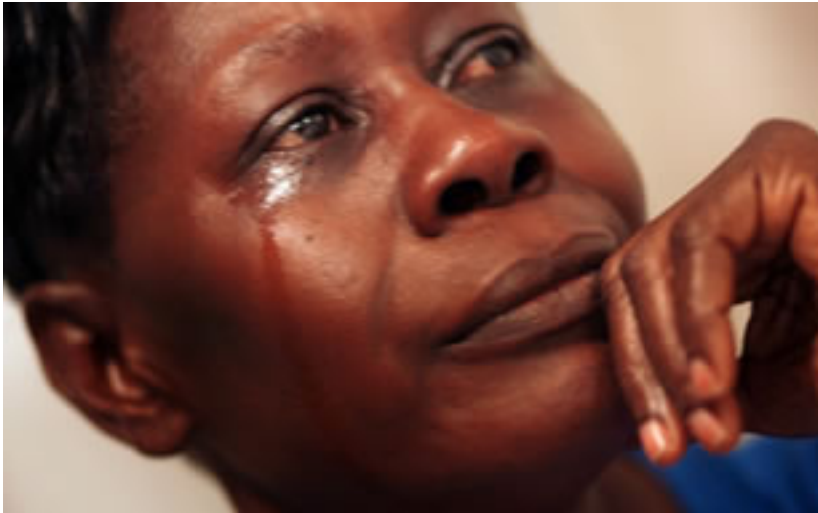


## Helpful Tips for Distinguishing Holiday Blues from Depression

Written by MHMRA Harris County  
Thursday, 08 December 2011 11:55

---

Untitled document



**From your friends at MHMRA of Harris County**

While the holidays are supposed to be a joyful time, many people can become overwhelmed by the flurry of activity that accompanies the season.

Holiday blues, the result of the stress and fatigue that can accompany winter festivities, are common. It is important, however, to recognize when the holiday blues might be something more serious like depression.

According to the DSM-IV, a manual used to diagnose mental disorders, depression occurs when you have at least five of the following nine symptoms at the same time that last longer than two weeks.

- Depressed mood most of the day
- Loss of interest in activities that you once enjoyed

## Helpful Tips for Distinguishing Holiday Blues from Depression

Written by MHMRA Harris County  
Thursday, 08 December 2011 11:55

---

- Changes in eating pattern, such as significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain
- Changes in sleeping pattern, such as little sleep (insomnia) or excessive sleep (hypersomnia)
- Psychomotor agitation or retardation
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness
- Recurrent thoughts of death (not just fear of dying), recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide

Whether you experience all or only some of these symptoms for more than two weeks, you should seek professional help. When ignored or left untreated, depression likely will not go away and may even become worse.

## Helpful Tips for Distinguishing Holiday Blues from Depression

Written by MHMRA Harris County  
Thursday, 08 December 2011 11:55

---

The following self-help techniques may be beneficial in dealing with the holiday blues:

- Express yourself by talking to trusted friends and family members about how you feel, journaling, and using a hobby as a creative outlet.
- Engage in fun activities even though you may not feel like doing so. Doing things you once enjoyed can take your mind off of feeling blue and remind you that you can be happy.
- Challenge negative thoughts. A hallmark of the holiday blues is thinking poorly of yourself and others. Challenging these thoughts can help you find a more balanced, more positive way of viewing situations.
- Care for yourself by eating a healthy diet, getting eight hours of sleep, and minimizing your exposure to stressful situations.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes a day. If possible, try exercising outdoors because sunlight can alleviate depression. Relaxation exercises, such as yoga, are helpful.

Above all, remember that depression is a medical illness, not a sign of weakness. It is treatable and should not be ignored or left untreated.

For more information, visit [www.mhmraharris.org](http://www.mhmraharris.org). If you, or someone you know, are experiencing a psychiatric emergency, please call the MHMRA HelpLine at 713-970-7000.

## Helpful Tips for Distinguishing Holiday Blues from Depression

Written by MHMRA Harris County  
Thursday, 08 December 2011 11:55

---

*MHMRA of Harris County is a public agency providing community-based mental health and intellectual/developmental disability (IDD) services and supports to Harris County residents. More than 1,800 staff delivers personalized care through 40+ programs and services to unserved and underserved populations with wide range of mental disorders. The largest mental health and IDD authority in Texas, MHMRA of Harris County is a catalyst for positive change on a local, state and national level in mental health and IDD services and supports. To learn more, please visit [www.mhmraharris.org](http://www.mhmraharris.org).*