



## Holiday Stress: 10 Tips for Chasing Holiday Blues When This Year is "Different" by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Some holidays are different. There may be people missing from gatherings, or changing family structures. There may be illness, or empty seats at the table. Families may be touched either by unemployment, or perhaps by excessive workloads. There may be any number of reasons why a holiday will require some special effort to find, or to create for others, the true spirit of the season. If this year finds you struggling with sadness or depression, here are a few soothers that I hope will be helpful to you this year.

1. Put yourself on top of your list, and give yourself something you long for. It need not be expensive. A day off? Lunch date with an old friend? New CDs or books?
2. You don't have to do this alone. If you could benefit from talking with a professional for some support, don't hesitate. Get some pleasurable exercise, fresh air and some hugs every day.
3. Find humor at work, at home, at the gym, the laundromat. Laughter is the best stress-reliever. When we're blue, smiling reminds us how we *can* feel, and encourages others to smile back. Before we know it, the feel-good factor is kicking in, and we've boosted endorphins in ourselves and others!
4. For one whole week, give out (*wrapped!*) mini-candy canes to everyone you see. Don't forget the mailman, firefighters, police, cashiers, librarian, Salvation Army workers, etc.
5. Reach out and give, somehow, to someone else. Opportunities abound in December to volunteer. Give blood, donate finances, goods and services. Amid the tremendous need for disaster-relief, don't forget more traditional charities who may be receiving fewer contributions. Their need is as great as ever.
6. Get yourself a pen, a beautiful journal and make a "thrills" list. List every thrill you've ever experience, from shooting stars to simple pleasures. Create a couple of new thrills for yourself!
7. Rent thoughtful, inspiring movies (*e.g. "Pay it Forward" - great concept, with Helen Hunt/Kevin Spacey, "Defending Your Life" - one of my all-time favorites with Meryl Streep/Albert Brooks*) Or distract yourself with comedies that don't think at all!

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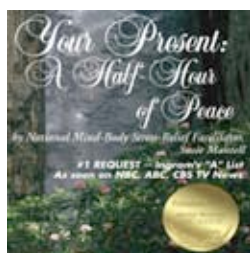
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- 8. Feeling off-center? Close your eyes, clear your mind, and find balance by focusing on your breathing. Slowly, repeatedly, exhale through one nostril, and inhale through the other. It's easier if you position a finger to close off one side while "using" the other nostril. Eventually, you might not need to. This is deeply soothing. Find hundreds more stress-relief tips at [www.relaxintuit.com/tips/asp](http://www.relaxintuit.com/tips/asp)
- 9. Wish! With for you, for someone else, wish for world peace -- Wish really big! Write a "Wish List" for the new year.
- 10. Visit a meditative website named: " Interview With God" : <http://www.reata.org/interview2.html>  
(Note to Atheists: Skip this one. Watch "I Love Lucy" reruns, and give out candy canes instead!) This is a meditative website with a short, gentle video / No specific religious faith is necessary to enjoy this. It's just a great place to visit, relax, watch a video for a few sweet moments.

**Bonus Tip: Believe...**

This season, and in all seasons, believe in whatever it is that is good and true. Believe in yourself and in humankind, in nature and beauty and music and laughter, and believe in the power of hope. Whether or not you practice any religious faith, believe in honor and goodness and the people you cherish and in the values by which you wish to live. Believe in children, and a brighter tomorrow, and in possibilities beyond even your bravest dreams. Believe in this moment, right now. It really *is* a gift. My warmest wishes to you, wherever you are, for a bright New Year filled with great health, love and laughter, miracles and, as always, above all, peace.

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