



# Holiday Survival Guide



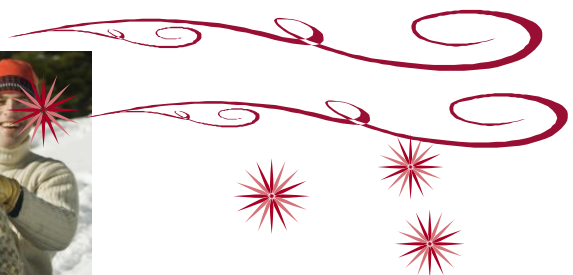
*Providing Direction In Life*

Ben Gordon Center offers mental health and recovery services for adults and families in our community. Ben Gordon Center offers services on a sliding fee for those who qualify. Ben Gordon Center Inc also accepts Medicaid, Medicare, and all Insurance Plans

*For more information about, mental health, substance abuse or about Family or individual counseling call the Ben Gordon Center at...*

**815-756-4875  
In Dekalb  
Or  
815-786-7544 in  
Sandwich**

Or visit our Website at  
[www.bengordoncenter.org](http://www.bengordoncenter.org)



## The Holidays

Can be a joyous and stressful time



*Happy holidays from our family to yours!*

Although the holidays are supposed to be a time full of joy, good cheer and optimistic hopes for a new year, many people experience seasonal "Stress". "The holiday season is full of parties and family gatherings, but for many people it is also a time of self-evaluation, loneliness, reflection on past 'Failures' and anxiety about an uncertain year", said Michael Flora, President and CEO of the Ben Gordon Center.

"Holiday Stress" can be caused by many factors: increased stress and fatigue, unrealistic expectations, over-commercialization and the inability to be with one's family. The increased demands of shopping, parties, family reunions and house guests also

contribute to these feelings of tension. "Even people who do not become depressed can develop other stress reactions during the holidays such as headaches, excessive drinking, over-eating and difficulty sleeping" "Flora added.

Although, many people become depressed during the holiday season, even more respond to the excessive stress and anxiety once the holidays have passed. This post-holiday letdown after January 1 can be the result of emotional disappointments experienced during the preceding months as well as physical reactions caused by excess fatigue and stress.

## Signs and Symptoms of Depression



The term depression is used to refer to a common medical condition with very specific symptoms. These symptoms can include:

- Feelings of sadness
- Loss of interest and /or pleasure in once enjoyed activities
- Changes in sleep, appetite or weight
- Irritability
- Withdrawal
- Feelings of fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and worthlessness
- Thoughts or feelings of suicide

**If you or someone you love is experiencing these symptoms call today at  
756-4875 or  
1-866-BGC 0111  
24 hours a day 7 days a week**

## Slow-Cooker Cranberry Punch

2 cups cranberry juice  
2 quarts apple cider  
1/2 cup sugar  
1 orange studded with 6 whole cloves  
2 cinnamon sticks, about 3 inches each  
Garnish: orange slices or cinnamon sticks.

1. Combine all ingredients (except garnish) in slow-cooker.
2. Simmer, covered, on low setting 1-1/2 hours.
3. Serve in warmed mugs.
4. Garnish each with orange slice or cinnamon stick.
5. Makes 10 servings.



## Tips for Surviving the Holidays

There are ways to identify potential sources of holiday Stress that can help individuals Survive the Holidays Flora, said.

- Keep expectations for the holiday season manageable by not trying to make this the best holiday ever. Try to set realistic goals. Pace yourself. Organize your time. Make a list and prioritize the most important activities. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. Do not spend too much time preparing for just one day (Christmas).
- Remember that the holiday season does not automatically banish reasons for feeling sad or lonely: there is room for these feelings to be present, even if the person chooses not to express them.

- Let go of the past. Don't be disappointed if your holidays are not like they used to be. Life brings changes. Each holiday season is different and can be enjoyed in its own way. You set yourself up for sadness if everything has to be just like "the good old days". Look toward the future.

- Do something for someone else. It is an old remedy but it can help. Try volunteering some time to help others

- Enjoy holiday activities that are free such as driving around to look at the holiday decorations. Go window shopping without buying anything.
- Don't drink too much. Excessive drinking will increase depression. Alcohol is a depressant and should be avoided if at all possible.
- Don't be afraid to try something new. Celebrate the holidays in a way you have never done before.
- Spend time with people who are supportive and care about you. Make new friends if you are alone during special times. Contact someone you have lost contact with.
- Find time for yourself! Don't spend all your time providing activities for your family or friends.



## Understanding Seasonal Affective Disorder

- Recent studies have shown that there are also environmental factors which can contribute to the feelings of depression around the holidays. Some people suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) which can result from

fewer hours of sunlight as the days grow shorter during the winter months. Researchers have found, however, that photo therapy, a treatment involving a few hours of exposure to intense ultra violet light, is effective in relieving depression symptoms in patients with SAD. (cont, on page 4)



### Holiday party Tips.

- Have plenty of non-alcoholic drinks available.
- Don't encourage or force guests to drink alcohol.
- Provide plenty of food so guests won't drink on an empty stomach.
- Remember to designate before you celebrate. Arrange a designated driver for those who are drinking alcohol.
- Paring an alcoholic punch, use a non-carbonated base such as fruit juice. Alcohol is absorbed into the blood stream faster when it has a carbonated base.
- Close your bar 90 minutes before your party is over and serve a great dessert treat and coffee, tea or soft drinks.
- Be honest. When inviting guests who are known to drink to excess, tell them that drinking and driving is unacceptable at your party. Get their agreement to find alternate modes of transportation.
- Activities and entertainment should be scheduled to keep the focus on celebrating a special occasion not drinking. Singing along with musical accompaniment, party games and board games for all ages are socially acceptable and fun!
- Companies holding office parties should consider arranging for discounted or complimentary rooms when a party is held at a hotel so employees won't drive home impaired.

## SAD Continued...

Common Signals of SAD are:

- A change in Sleep Patterns
- Extreme fatigue and drop in energy levels( slow, sluggish, lethargic movements)
- Decreased creativity and concentration
- Carbohydrate craving and increased appetite
- Social withdrawal
- Reduction in Sex Drive
- Feeling of depression, restlessness, irritability, anxiety or boredom

Other studies on the benefits of photo therapy found exposure to early morning sunlight was effective in relieving seasonal depression. Recent findings, however suggest that patients respond equally well to photo therapy in combination with medications and counseling.

It is important that individuals seek an assessment from a mental health professional before any form of treatment is conducted. Ben Gordon Center offers mental health, substance abuse and recovery services for adults, children and families in our community.



Favorite Christmas joke:

What do you call a person who is afraid of Santa Claus?

**Claustrophobic!**

## Myth or Fact?

**Myth:** Coffee will sober up a drunk.

**Fact:** Only the passage of time will cause sobriety.

**Myth:** Beer isn't as "bad" as hard liquor.

**Fact:** A 12 ounce bottle of beer, a 5 ounce glass of wine or a shot of hard liquor are each about the same amount of alcohol and will cause impairment.



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