



# THE INSTITUTE FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES OF NORTH TEXAS

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## **Say Goodbye to the Holiday Blues!**

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If we are not watchful during and after the holidays, we can talk ourselves into a depressive cycle that takes the joy out of spending quality time with family and friends. Sometimes our expectations of the holidays do not match with reality or with what others are able to give or receive. Here are **10 strategies** that are designed to prevent you from getting into a funk and missing out on fun and happiness. These self-help strategies are designed to provide tools to prevent a meltdown.

1. **Exercise Regularly.** Even during cold weather, we need the benefits of exercise to improve mood. Any physical movement will do whether it is walking, working out or dancing.
2. **Eat Nutritious Food.** Holidays are notorious for providing rich foods that may or not have any nutritional value, so it is important to eat healthy with lots of fruits and vegetables. You don't need to deprive yourself of sweets--small portions will satisfy cravings.
3. **Socialize Often.** Stay connected with family members and friends. Isolation leads to loneliness which can lead to feelings of depression. If you don't have invitations to parties, then plan a party and invite friends to spend some time with each other. Or, volunteer at one of the many agencies that is helping those who are down on their luck.
4. **Vent Feelings.** If you are feeling stressed out or frustrated, find healthy ways to discharge those bad feelings such as hitting a punching bag, writing about your stress level, singing in the shower, or running. If the feelings continue, take care of yourself by contacting a school or private counseling service.
5. **Get Enough Sleep.** Wind down earlier in the evening by having a cup of tea or hot chocolate before retiring. Sometimes it helps to have a luxurious bubble bath in the evening by turning down the lights and lighting some scented candles. If you are having difficulty sleeping for two or more weeks, contact a health professional for advice.
6. **Skip Drugs and Alcohol.** Turning to drugs and alcohol when you are suffering from mild to moderate depression can make a bad situation even worse. Don't mess with your prescription meds by taking too much or too little. If you are taking over-the-counter meds for a cold or virus, check with your pharmacist or doctor to make sure they are not compromised with other meds.
7. **Breathe!** When you feel anxious, take at least ten long deep breaths by closing your eyes and visualizing your worries melting away as you exhale. Deep breathing delivers more oxygen to your brain and clears your mind of cluttered feelings. Continue the process until you feel less stress.
8. **Meditate or Pray.** Meditation and/or prayer can lower blood pressure, reduce stress and lift your spirits to a positive state of mind. If you are a religious or spiritual person, seeking assistance from a Higher Power keeps you focused on healing your mind and emotions instead of focusing inward on your problems.
9. **Use Visualization.** This tool can help you to change your negative thoughts to positive thoughts by reframing. For example, if you are a female who feels "ugly", close your eyes and imagine that you are going to a spa for a massage, hairstyle and manicure. Now imagine (visualize) stepping out of the spa feeling beautiful to the admiring glances of others.
10. **Keep a Daily Journal.** Summarize your thoughts and feelings at the end of each day to chart progress. Include at least one intervention that you tried that made a difference in how you felt.

**The Institute of Healthy Families of North Texas** offers a 30-minute consultation at no charge so you can determine if we are the right counselors for you and so we can determine if we have the resources to assist you. For information and to learn more about our counseling services go to our website at [www.texasicounselors.com](http://www.texasicounselors.com) or e-mail Dr. Sandra Froese, who is a Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor at [swfroese@sbcglobal.net](mailto:swfroese@sbcglobal.net). Our rates are affordable.