

Six rules I follow to avoid depression during the holidays

By Christine Stapleton

Yesterday, as I was sitting on the front porch I was smacked upside the head by a Hallmark moment. An SUV with license plates from another state pulled in the driveway of the family across the street. I love having this family and their little ones across the street.



From the SUV spilled little cousins and what looked to be an aunt and grandmother. Their front yard was filled with hugs and babies on hips and grandmother smishing little cheeks as she bent down to hug the little ones.

“Oh sh#t, it’s the holiday season...again.”

I have depression and I’m a recovering alcoholic. My family is my daughter. She and I are the family – that’s it. No grandparents. No aunts. No uncles. No cousins. Our home has never been the site of a family with a turkey in the middle of the table.

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Some years we get invited to Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner at the homes of friends. Some years she and I get all dressed up, pull out the china and silver, light candles and eat alone. As a single mom with one child and a dog, I do the best I can but it's always pretty pathetic and lonely.

I am going to make a really big effort this year to enjoy the holidays. I am going to identify – not compare – my version of Thanksgiving and Christmas with other families. Still, I have a few rules that I follow to make sure I don't wake up on New Year's Day morning in a depression.

1. No drinking. Alcohol is a depressant. For an alcoholic like me, it's the first drink that gets me drunk – and depressed.
2. No overeating. Guilt and weight gain follow food frenzies. I don't like the way I look and then I don't like myself. When you are full, stop eating.
3. Turn the channel every time a diamond commercial comes on. Same with any commercial showing a pleasantly shocked woman with her hands over her gaping mouth looking at her new Lexus with the gigantic red bow on the roof.
4. Ditto for that terminally chipper Feliz Navidad song. Turn the station on the radio whenever it comes on. Same with those dogs barking Jingle Bells.
5. Don't covet they neighbors. Instead, covet and cherish what you do have.
6. Don't let your thoughts control you. Instead, control your thoughts. I have the power to stop thinking certain thoughts. Use that power. Recognize stinking thinking and change it, like changing the station when that Feliz Navidad song comes on the radio.

I'm ready. Let the holidays begin!

[Holiday stress photo](#) available from Shutterstock.

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