Combat Holiday Depression

For most of us, the holidays are a time to take a break from work and spend time with loved ones. For some, however, the holidays are a reminder that they are all by themselves. People may be geographically far away from friends and family, or there may just be an emotional distance that they can’t bridge.

Some people also experience a lot of stress during this time of year. Perhaps they try to live up to unrealistic expectations. They may not set appropriate boundaries and feel as though they must go and do and be all things to all people. Sometimes people may find themselves eating and drinking to excess, getting too little sleep, and spending more money than they comfortably can afford so that they “fit in” with the people around them.

Certainly, one of the first things people should do is set priorities about what they can do and what they feel like doing. It isn’t necessary to attend every dinner, party, or function. Keeping as normal a schedule as possible is also helpful.

If everything feels painful and overwhelming, it is important to ask for professional help. Depression responds well to treatment, but the person has to be willing to be treated.

Fun, Frugal Holiday Activities

1. Prepare popcorn and hot chocolate and watch old movies.
2. As a family, begin putting together a giant jigsaw puzzle on December 1 and try to finish it by New Year’s Day.
3. Go Christmas caroling.
4. Bake homemade cookies and candy and give them out to neighbors.
5. Find out how other countries/cultures celebrate the holidays and include one of those traditions in your celebration.
Living successfully in Oklahoma means being ready for just about anything: ice, snow, dust, floods, fire, droughts, tornadoes, and earthquakes. Some of you who have never experienced any of the above may not think about those events at all. Others may worry, but not really do anything else. A few of you may have an “It won’t happen to me” attitude. Disasters can, and do, happen. How well we survive them is sometimes a matter of how well we have planned for them.

One of the first things to do in preparation for some kind of event is to make a plan. All too often, when an event such as a fire takes place, it occurs so quickly that there is no time to think. Imagine being awakened in the wee hours of the morning and trying to make life or death decisions in that moment. It isn’t easy. However, if you’ve got a plan and the family has practiced it, it is easier for everyone to remember what to do and where they need to be.

Cell phones may be our link to the rest of the world, but they’re only useful as long as the batteries last. Be sure to keep yours charged in case the power is off for an extended period of time. If you use a smart phone of some kind, you might also want just a basic cell phone that doesn’t have all the bells and whistles on it. These use less power, so their batteries last longer.

Have a survival kit for each person in the family. With very few members of the U. S. population trained as First Responders, it may take three or more days for a professional to find you in the event of a major disaster. For this reason, it’s important to have some basic supplies, food, fresh water, and clothes to last for a while. For a list of what ought to be in a well-stocked kit, go to www.ok.gov/red_dirt_ready/PREPARE/index.html.

Some other things to consider are how you and the members of your family will contact each other after an event occurs. It is recommended that you have an out-of-state friend or relative who can be your relay person in case disaster strikes. If something major happens, local cell towers will be jammed by people trying to call loved ones. Making a call out of state will be easier.

Write down important information such as any health conditions you or your loved ones have and what medications you take. Again, you should have enough medicine in your kit to last for about three days.

There are special instructions on the Red Dirt Ready website for how to care for someone who has a disability. You might be able to scramble to safety as the flood waters rise or if the ice collapses your roof, but what about a person who has mobility issues, or who is blind or deaf? You might have to help a very young child or an elderly person.

Lastly, if you have pets, you need to plan for their care, too. They also will need food and water to last for at least three days.

In a perfect world, we would never have to think about such things. In Oklahoma, it’s better to be safe than sorry.
Don’t be one of those students who, upon hearing the words, “Finals Week,” finds your heart racing and the classic sound “Dun, Dun, Dun!” running through your head. Finals week does not mean doom and gloom. On the contrary, finals week should be a time of relief. After the right amount of study and preparation, finals week can be a breeze. It can be your chance to show yourself and your professor everything you learned this semester. It’s also confirmation that the semester will soon be over. There are some simple things every student can do to make this shift from feeling like the end of the world is near to showing off your knowledge.

Keep in mind that preparation and organization are the keys to success in finals week. Almost all college students know at the start of the semester that they will have a final and when that final will be. Therefore, the notion that you aren’t ready or did not have enough time to study is not going to cut it. However, you can start studying in small blocks of time, form a study group, review old tests and notes, and start preparing flash cards ahead of time.

One of the main reasons finals week is so dreaded is that it is so time-consuming, and students stay up cramming into the wee hours of the morning. Don’t let yourself do this. Getting enough sleep and allowing your brain to rest will keep both your mind and your body from becoming exhausted.

What will you gain from this new way of handling finals week? You will be able to say, “I’ve got this.” You’ve been attending your classes, completing your homework, and are well-prepared for your finals. You have morphed into the master dominator of finals week, and you will come out victorious.

Avoiding Winter Hazards

The same weather conditions that make winter a pretty season can also make it a health hazard. By having an awareness of the dangers, you can help yourself have a healthy and uneventful season.

1. Shoveling snow isn’t just hard work. It’s a killer. Cold air constricts the blood vessels, and the added exertion of moving heavy snow can lead to a heart attack. If you must shovel for yourself, plan to do so in stages rather than as one event.

2. Ice is slippery and respects no one. Use extreme caution if having to walk on it. Put sand or kitty litter on icy spots and re-apply it as the area melts and refreezes. If possible, avoid going out when conditions are icy.

3. If you’ve been out in the cold for a while and begin to feel sleepy, go inside and warm up. It takes very little time for hypothermia to set in and chill you to your core.

4. Make sure you don’t expose your skin to too much cold. Frostbite occurs when parts of your body freeze. Warming and then refreezing these areas can cause ice crystals in the tissues. If you suspect you have frostbite, seek medical attention.

5. Driving requires traction. Auto commercials want you to believe that you can drive on ice in their car. However, no matter what kind of car or truck it is, you will have little control over it in icy weather. Have another cup of cocoa and travel later.

You may be exhausted now, but there really is life after college.

Do you have ideas for articles or recipes? Send them to Mary Turner at mturner@occc.edu or to Alta Price at aprice@occc.edu.
Student Support Services houses a variety of services designed to enhance the performance and well-being of students at Oklahoma City Community College.

- Services to Students with Disabilities, including providing accommodations for documented disabilities, interpreting and captioning services for deaf and hard of hearing students, and assistive technology.
- Professional counseling by licensed providers.
- Learning support specialists to assist with academic needs such as learning styles, study skills, test-taking, and general health and wellness issues.
- TRIO Grant Programs (Upward Bound and Trio Student Support Services) designed to help first generation college students learn more about college before they arrive and how to be more successful once they are here.

For more information about our services and how to access them, please visit our website at http://www.occc.edu/support/ or call us at 682-7520. We are located on the first floor of the Main Building near SEM Entry 3.

---

**Maple Walnut Cake**

Cake
- 1 cup chopped pitted dates
- 1/2 cup boiling water
- 1 cup whole wheat pastry flour
- 3/4 cup all purpose flour
- 1 cup toasted walnuts, divided
- 3/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 large egg
- 3/4 cup pure maple syrup
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 2 teaspoons cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract

Glaze
- 2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon cider vinegar
- 3/4 cup gently packed confectioners’ sugar
- 1 to 2 teaspoons water, if needed

Preheat oven to 325°F. Coat a 10-inch springform pan with cooking spray.

Place the dates in a small bowl and pour boiling water over them to soak. Let cool to room temperature.

Process whole wheat flour, all purpose flour, 2/3 cup walnuts, baking soda, and salt in a food processor until the walnuts are completely ground and the mixture resembles course meal. Transfer to a medium bowl; make a well in the center.

Puree the dates and soaking water in the food processor until smooth, scraping the sides down as necessary. Add egg, 3/4 cup syrup, oil butter, 2 teaspoons vinegar and vanilla and process until smooth and creamy. Scrape the date mixture into the well in the dry ingredients and stir together gently until just combined. Transfer to the prepared pan.

Bake the cake until a skewer inserted in the center comes out clean, 30 to 35 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool completely. Run a knife around the edges to loosen the cake, if necessary, and remove the sides of the pan.

To glaze cake: Carefully lift the cake from the pan bottom and place on a cake stand or serving plate. Whisk maple syrup, vinegar and confectioners’ sugar in a small bowl. Add water, 1 teaspoon at a time, if necessary, to make a spreadable consistency. Spread the glaze evenly over the top of the cake. Decorate with the remaining 1/3 cup walnuts.

Per Serving:
- 342 calories
- 16 grams fat
- 28 milligrams cholesterol
- 48 grams carbohydrates
- 4 grams protein
- 3 grams fiber
- 136 milligrams sodium
- 201 milligrams potassium