



for

Your Employee and Family Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Everywhere we turn during the holiday season, we are bombarded by happy and uplifting messages—on television we see images of people opening the "perfect gift", and, on the streets we are awash in a

going through.

The first thing to remember is that you are not alone in feeling this way; it is common for the holidays to bring up feelings of being alone, rushed, harried and pressured. On the one hand, you are expected to be joyous and festive and in the holiday spirit, but

what if:

You are feeling lonely, and family and friends are not available or nearby?

The holidays remind you of someone you've lost or can't be with?

You feel that the details are getting in the way of your holiday enjoyment?

You are just feeling down and are uncertain as to why?

It is not uncommon for the holidays to trigger a wide variety of emotions, reactions and situations that are difficult to deal with. Couple this with the false impression that everyone else around you is enjoying themselves, and it is no wonder that so many of us are vulnerable to feeling a sense of isolation.

The first step in dealing with loneliness is to understand that no one is immune to this feeling. It is also important to realize that you do not have to be "alone" in order to suffer the negative effects of loneliness. It is very common to feel a sense of isolation even when surrounded by people at events such as family get-togethers, office functions or even standing in the middle of a crowd in a jam-packed shopping centre.

Acknowledging loneliness is not the cure to feeling this way. It is, however, the first important step in dealing with and managing your reactions to this very powerful emotion. A simple and effective way of combating the effects of feeling alone is to relax, slow down and take stock of your situation and how you are reacting to it.

If you are feeling an overwhelming sense of being alone, try to:

- There are also other people around you who may be experiencing similar feelings during the



- By doing this you will not only get through what "needs to be done", but you will also give yourself the chance to enjoy the process and each step along the way.

Sometimes we need a little bit more than just time to ourselves to properly manage our emotions because what we are experiencing may be more serious than just the "holiday blues".

Experiencing short episodes of feeling down during what is often referred to as 'the festive season' is completely normal. It is when we are caught in a persistent feeling of sadness over an extended period of time, that we may be experiencing depression.

Other signs of depression can also include:

- A loss of interest in pursuits that were previously enjoyable
- Trouble falling asleep or sleeping too much
- Increase or decrease in appetite or weight
- Feeling tired and weak
- Feeling anxious or restless
- Problems concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Crying more easily than usual
- Feeling overwhelmed by negative thoughts
- Feeling worthless, guilty, helpless or hopeless
- Thinking or talking about death or suicide

If you experience any of the warning signs of depression listed above, or have any other reason to