

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Overwhelmed by the holiday season?**

Free, anonymous mental health self-assessments available at  
<http://www.mhafc.org/screenings.php>

It's supposed to be "the Most Wonderful Time of the Year." However, if you can't get into the spirit and feel like a Grinch this season, it may be more than just a case of the holiday blues.

Depression is a common, yet serious, illness that affects more than 19 million Americans each year. Sometimes a stressful event –such as the holiday season- can trigger depression, but other times it can occur with no specific cause.

Early warning signs for holiday depression include having a shorter temper than normal, sleep problems, losing interest in activities you normally enjoy, and over-reacting to minor annoyances.

Don't let an undiagnosed mood or anxiety disorder get in the way of enjoying this joyous time of year. Gauge your emotional well-being by taking a free, anonymous online mental health self-assessment offered by Mental Health America of Franklin County. Visit <http://www.mhafc.org/screenings.php> and complete a simple online questionnaire. You will receive immediate feedback as well as the opportunity to schedule an appointment for further evaluation if necessary.

Tips for dealing with holiday stress and anxiety:

- ✓ **Keep holiday expectations real:** balancing the demands of the holiday season -shopping, parties and family obligations- can be very stressful. Create a realistic budget and try not to sweat the small stuff.
- ✓ **Use alcohol moderately:** Alcohol is a depressant. Excessive drinking can increase your feelings of sadness.
- ✓ **Eat right and nurture your body:** A balanced diet, moderate exercise and rest can help you to reduce stress and enjoy life.
- ✓ **Learn to identify your moods:** The holiday blues are a common response to a stressful season. However, if feelings of hopelessness and anxiety persist for longer than two weeks and interfere with your normal, daily routine, seek professional help.
- ✓ **Set a healthy holiday budget:** Overspending during the season can lead to stress and anxiety. Spend wisely and remember it is the thought that counts.

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[www.mhafc.org](http://www.mhafc.org)

