

Hurting During the Holidays and 6 Gifts You Can Give to Make a Difference



It's the 'most wonderful time of the year'...or is it?

While it's true that many people are most joyful during the holiday season, there are countless others who struggle to find any joy in it at all. In fact, for many people, this time of year is devastating and debilitating. For some, this season is a reminder of better days. Days before a breakup...before a tragedy...before a diagnosis...before a death. The holidays can bring up emotions that conflict the joy of the season with memories from the past or present-day problems.

For those who aren't facing this struggle, it's easy to go about our merry ways wrapped up in the hustle and bustle of the holidays. Perhaps this season we make an effort to give the brokenhearted some encouragement and companionship.

Here are 6 practical "gifts" to give those who are hurting through the holiday season:

- **The gift of listening**
 - Be an active listener, providing them the opportunity to share what they're feeling without telling them what they need to do.
- **The gift of presence**
 - As loneliness is often the greatest source of pain, invite the person to your home to spend the evening without any agenda in mind.
- **The gift of remembrance**
 - As sounds, smells, and sights of the holidays can trigger some strong emotions, give them space to talk about holidays past and special memories.
- **The gift of the unusual**
 - Encourage them to do something out of the ordinary and be willing to participate.
- **The gift of a mood-boost**
 - Get active! According to the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, as little as 30-minutes of cardiovascular exercise can provide an immediate mood-boost similar to the effects of an antidepressant medication.
- **The gift of friendship**
 - Include them in activities throughout the season (even if they continue to cancel last minute) and offer to pick them up.
 - Text words of encouragement to remind them you care.

What to do if feelings of sadness are accompanied by suicidal thoughts:

- Refer them to help and personally take them. If the threat is acute, **call 9-1-1**.
- Contact the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at 1-800-273-TALK.

Please visit www.teenesteem.org for helpful parenting resources and past editions of The Bulletin.