The FBCYICN Guide to Surviving the Holidays

Despite media messages to the contrary, holiday times (like Christmas, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day, etc.) can be a pretty tough. Many of us are alone, or have really complicated, challenging family/friend relationships to face. THEN, on top of that, there's so much pressure to have SO MUCH FUN, be involved in all of the social gatherings, buy ALL THE GIFTS EVERRRR, make delicious home-cooked meals, have the best-family-ever-OMG, and have time off to relax. Or sometimes, we don't have access to these opportunities like we want.

If you're finding that it's not really the best time ever, you're not alone! In fact, MOST people feel this way to some degree, but we just don't talk about it much. Movies, commercials, advertisement posters and the news can be bad for painting a picture of what holidays are supposed to be, but real life is nothing like that for most of us, especially those of us in and from care.

IT'S TOTALLY NORMAL TO FEEL:

Like the holidays are dumb

Like the holidays are awesome!

Like you wish you had people to celebrate with

Like there's so much pressure to have fun or make things really fun for others

Like you can't afford to do what you want

Like "these holidays are rooted in painful histories and that we might not want to celebrate them"

Like, "how can people celebrate when there's so much pain in the world?"

Like, "why are people so PC all the time and won't just get excited about some cool traditions?"

Like, "why do people care so much about material possessions?"

Like you wish you could visit with all the people you love but you can't 'cause it's expensive, you have to work, or they're not available

Like there's pressure to spend time with your family, and you feel like you should, but you kind of don't want to because it's stressful and difficult.

Like you should be able to buy people presents, but can't (even though deep down you know material things aren't that important, there's still SO MUCH PRESSURE!)

Like, "I wish I got some presents like my friends will get—what am I gonna say when everyone asks what I got?"

Like you wish you could be with your "real" family

Like you wish you didn't feel left out and awkward around your foster family

Like you wish your holiday was like everyone else's you know

Like you don't believe in Santa or God or Jesus or any of that stuff, but you still kinda feel left out

Like you believe in Santa or God and Jesus, and wonder why no one seems to get what Christmas is about anymore

Left out of everything because you celebrate Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or another holiday during this time—and wonder "why does everyone assume I celebrate Christmas?"

Like "can't it just be over already?"

Depressed

More anxious and angry than normal

STRESSSSSED

Pissed off

Lonely

Frustrated

Like whenever you get around your family, they treat you like a kid and it's frustrating

Bad about yourself because you can't provide your family with the holiday you'd like (psst, they mostly just want to be with you and that's what they'll remember)

"Thanks ya'll, that's helpful, but I still feel like poo."

Sometimes, it's helpful enough just to remember these things, and that whatever you're experiencing, it's normal and okay and pretty common. Sometimes, though, it's not enough. Then it becomes really important to reach out to our communities for support during this time; we all deserve to be part of a supportive community.

Here are some helpful tips for getting through the holidays:

Eat nutritiously and get sleep if possible—this can really affect your mood, more than we would think

Exercise, including walks and yoga, sends a bunch of happy-making chemicals through your body

Journal—get your feelings out in the open and have a good cry, maybe while listening to angry/sad music

Remember that it's going to be over soon, and the New Year is a fresh new year

Remember that so many people are feeling just like you, so re-read this list or reach out to some people you know who are in the same position, even if it's just over IM

Keep in mind that the older you get as an adult, the better holidays get 'cause you can chose your family and your traditions

If you have loved-ones nearby, try to spend time with them if possible. The family we choose is often more important to us than our bio families

If you can, look into supports in your community that are open over the holidays, including youth drop-in centres, Aboriginal Friendship Centres, and, as always: BC Crisis Line, open 24/7—they're really nice volunteers sitting there waiting to talk to you on the phone toll free or on live chat; you can call to talk whenever you're feeling down, it doesn't have to be a real crisis:

http://youthinbc.com OR 1.866.661.3311

Also, you can check out this blog post on depression… it's funny, but also heartbreakingly true: http://hyperboleandahalf.blogspot.ca/2011/10/adventures-in-depression.html

The bottom line: do whatever feels right for you. Also, everyone deserves to be part of a supportive community, so reach out if you feel like you can… it can be the difference between this: