

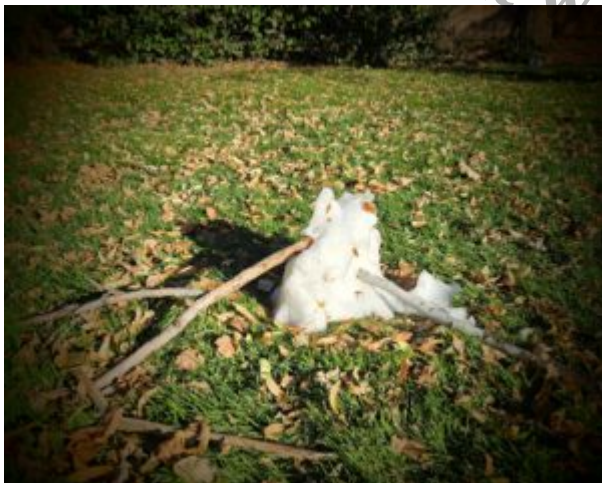
Making Spirits Bright

Description

“We have been socialized to expect good times and cheer from family and social gatherings [during the holiday season]; sadness and anxiety are frequent feelings during the holidays. Running from them will only worsen your distress.”

“Lloyd Sederer, MD, psychiatrist and former Chief Medical Officer of New York State’s Office of Mental Health.”

We recently had a big early-season snowstorm here in Colorado. For three days straight, it snowed, and I stayed bundled up in my house, feeling grateful for shelter, warmth, and a pantry full of food—luxuries I too often take for granted. These quiet moments of gratitude prompted me to think about those without shelter or the comforts I enjoy. Understanding the experiences of others isn’t always easy, but isn’t it important that we try?



When the snow finally cleared and the sunshine returned, my pup and I resumed our long walks. Along the way, I spotted a sad little melting snowman. It struck me how this image captures what so many people feel this time of year—melting away under the weight of it all.

We often wish each other “Happy Holidays!”—and that’s a lovely sentiment—but for many, this season is anything but happy. Financial stress, family pressures, societal expectations around gift-giving, decorating, or hosting can amplify feelings of anxiety and exhaustion. There’s also the pain of missing loved ones at the holiday table or feeling disconnected from family and friends. The constant stream of holiday music and imagery promising magical moments can deepen disappointment when reality falls short.

Even those who approach the holidays with excitement and joy aren’t immune to stress. A 2023 poll by the American Psychological Association found that nearly 89% of Americans report concerns such as financial strain, missing loved ones, and anticipating family conflict as significant stressors during the holiday season.

So hereâ??s my challenge to all of us this year: letâ??s make othersâ?? spirits bright! Reflect on these questions to guide your efforts:

- Who in my life might be experiencing loneliness, grief, or hardship this season?
- Do I have space at my table, in my home, or in my heart to invite someone to share a meal or a moment of connection?
- What small, thoughtful gesture could brighten someoneâ??s dayâ??a phone call, handwritten card, or even a batch of cookies?
- How can I show care and support in ways that feel meaningful but remain within my emotional and financial limits?
- Are there community events or volunteer opportunities where I could offer my time to make a difference?
- What traditions or practices could I start to foster inclusivity and kindness during the holidays?

As we close out another year, letâ??s make kindness our mission. Small, intentional acts of care can have an enormous impact. Iâ??d love to hear your stories of spreading joy and holiday cheer. And if youâ??re struggling yourself, know that youâ??re not alone. Please reach outâ??to me, or a mental health professional, or a loved one â??for support and encouragement.

Everyone deserves to feel seen, valued, and loved.

Category

1. Family
2. Life
3. Mindset

Tags

1. friends
2. gratitude
3. holidays
4. intentional
5. love
6. mindful
7. spread joy

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