HAPPY.... OR HORRIBLE HOLIDAYS?

It gets everywhere! On television and radio, in shops, newspapers and magazines, on the internet and even all the outdoor decorations. We can't escape it. The holidays are

coming!

It seems that everyone else has a wonderful family time.....except me?

Fact or opinion?

Perhaps a minority of people are fortunate enough to have a lovely family time. The majority have some good family times mixed



with quite a lot of work, stress and financial burden. Family stresses can be greatly exaggerated and become intolerable over the holiday period when everyone is forced to spend time together, trying to keep things cheerful. For others, it is a very lonely time. A reminder that we are alone, out of contact with, or without family. If we have friends, then they will probably be spending time with their families and have little spare time for us. Everything seems to be closed on the day itself: shops, libraries, cafes and all other meeting points or places where we might be in contact with others.

So what can we do? How can we get through this time? Maybe even change things so that we can feel better about it.

If we change the way we think about it, or change what we do – then we will change the way we feel. If we carry on thinking and doing what we've always done, then nothing will change and we will have a miserable holiday time.

Use the examples on the following pages to decide how you can make things better.

My alternative cycle:

How can I think differently?
What can I do differently?
How will I feel if I think/act differently?

A typical depressed and lonely vicious cycle

THOUGHTS

It's going to be awful
Everyone else will be with family
I'll be alone for days
Nobody wants a loser like me
I'll never cope with it



BEHAVIOURS

Escape
Isolate myself - stay in
Withdraw - avoid others
Do nothing

FEELINGS

Body: Tired, no energy

Emotions:
Sad
Lonely
Depressed

Alternative cycle:

THOUGHTS

I've got through it before, I will cope this time
There are things I can do to make things better
I've been looking at it very negatively - that's not how
things really are, all the time



BEHAVIOURS

Find out about others in similar situation (ask! E.g. health professional, Citizens Advice Bureau, place of worship, library, charities)

Plan what I can do every day
Contact someone every day
Go out
Meet others





FEELINGS

OK

A typical stressed vicious cycle

THOUGHTS

There's too much to do
I'll never get it all done
They won't like what I do/have
Everyone will be critical of me
I can't cope with it all



BEHAVIOURS

Rush around, doing too much, not completing

Avoid - leave until last minute then rush around!

FEELINGS

Body: Adrenaline/stress response - "hyped up"

Emotions:
Stressed
Anxious
Irritable

Alternative cycle:

THOUGHTS

I have coped before - I can get through it again
I can make things better this time
I can break things down into smaller tasks
I can talk to family/friends and let them know things will be different this year



BEHAVIOURS

Plan and prepare
Write lists and prioritise

Break down tasks into smaller

chunks and do something every week/day

Work out how much I can afford

Set aside weekly amount of money

Buy a little each week

FEELINGS

OK Calm