

The 'Experts' Tell Us Christmas Is the Most Depressing Time of the Year—Do You Agree?

For many people, the holiday season is the most dreaded time of the year. But does it have to be that way?

The holidays can be a real pressure point because they tend to magnify our problems. If you are a very busy person, it is likely that you are even busier and more stressed for time during December. If your family relationships are strained, this time of the year can be really tough because there is pressure to interact with family. Other people who feel a deep sense of loneliness often find that it becomes even deeper and more intense around Christmas. And more than anything else, so many people feel like they are missing out on something because their holidays never seem to match up with the glittering ideal that is constantly portrayed in the movies and on television. We are a deeply unhappy nation anyway, but this time of the year just seems to make it even worse.

The truth is that there are a lot of people out there who can't wait for the Christmas season to be over. If you can believe it, one survey found that 45 percent of us actually dread the holiday season. The following is an excerpt from a *Psychology Today* article:

We are told that Christmas, for Christians, should be the happiest time of year, an opportunity to be joyful and grateful with family, friends and colleagues. Yet, according to the National Institute of Health, Christmas is the time of year that people experience the highest incidence of depression. Hospitals and police forces report the highest

incidences of suicide and attempted suicide. Psychiatrists, psychologists and other mental health professionals report a significant increase in patients complaining about depression. One North American survey reported that 45 percent of respondents dreaded the festive season.

A different survey found a similar result. According to that survey, 48 percent of all men say that they “feel depressed or sad” around Christmas.

Amid pressures to be “merry” and “happy,” nearly half of men admit that they actually feel depressed or sad over Christmas, a study by the Samaritans has revealed.

Out of 140 people polled by an online survey, 48 percent of men said they feel low in December, with 45 percent saying their worries were the most troubling during the festive period compared to any other time of the year.

But of course it isn't as though we are a happy bunch the rest of the year, either. It has been reported that the number of Americans formally diagnosed with depression increases by approximately 20 percent every year, and at this point about one out of every six Americans is on an antidepressant or some other kind of psychiatric drug.

The number used to be one in ten, but according to new data, one out of every six adult Americans is taking antidepressants or some other type of psychiatric drugs now.

What that breaks down to is “Overall, 16.7 percent of 242 million U.S. adults reported filling one or more prescriptions for psychiatric drugs in 2013,” according to research published today in Journal of the American Medical Association’s JAMA Internal Medicine.

Those are absolutely staggering numbers, and the epidemic is

the worst among middle-aged women. It may be hard to believe, but at this point one out of every four women in their 40s and 50s is taking an antidepressant medication.

And once you get on these drugs, you tend to stay on them for a very long time. One study found that more than 84 percent of the people on these drugs get them refilled at least three times a year.

Getting off these drugs is not easy, but staying on them indefinitely can be absolutely debilitating.

When are we going to recognize we have a serious national crisis on our hands? Nobody disputes that, by a wide margin, we are the most drugged people on the entire planet. Incredibly, Americans account for only five percent of the global population, but we consume more than 50 percent of the pharmaceutical drugs.

What is wrong with us?

According to the New York Times, more than 30 million Americans take antidepressants right now, and it has been reported that health professionals in the United States write more than 250 million prescriptions for antidepressants every year.

If we are not depressed, then why are we taking so much antidepressant medication?

Of course, the truth is that we are deeply depressed as a nation, and there are many out there who have decided to medicate themselves. In the United States today, 60 million people abuse alcohol, and another 22 million people abuse illegal drugs.

So why are we so unhappy?

Well, there are lots of reasons, but one of the big ones is the breakdown of the family.

The only two countries that have a higher divorce rate than the United States are Belarus and the Maldives. When it comes to marriage, we are a dramatic failure as a nation, but nobody seems to be making fixing our marriages a major national priority.

We also have the highest percentage of one-person households on the entire planet, and this leads to a tremendous amount of loneliness.

Our wealth and technology have allowed us to become more isolated than ever before, but that is not a good thing. A century ago, people were living in the average U.S. household, but now the average U.S. household only consists of people.

When you start seeing these numbers, our nation's deep level of depression starts making sense.

And fewer Americans than ever are choosing to get married and start families. According to a Pew Research Center survey, only 51 percent of all adults in the United States are married.

But all the way back in 1960, 72 percent of all adults in this country were married.

So what is the answer?

Well, you don't need to run out and get married and start a family right away in order to be happy. In fact, some of the unhappiest people in the entire world are married.

And you aren't going to find happiness in Christmas traditions either. You won't find happiness by buying bigger and better Christmas presents, you won't find happiness by watching more movies about Santa Claus and you definitely won't find happiness in a tree.

In the end, what we are all craving is love and connection. If you have pleasant holiday memories, they invariably involve

other people. That is because we were created to love and to be loved, and when we get away from that we start to get into trouble.

The greatest need in our world today is love. If you feel as though there is not a lot of love in your life right now, ask yourself how much love you have been giving to others.

Often it is the people who give the most love that end up receiving the most love. So if you want more love in your life, start reaching out and loving others.

If you endeavor to become a person of great love, you will become happier not only during the holiday season, but during every other time of the year as well. {eo}