

NEWS *Letter*



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About The Author

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Rodney Presley is a licensed clinical social worker specializing in individual, couples, and men's mental health therapy. His work focuses on helping people navigate anxiety, trauma, relationships, and life transitions with authenticity and balance.

At Oak Tree Behavioral Services, Rodney leads a team dedicated to supporting BIPOC individuals and families in finding emotional wellness and connection through therapy and education.

You don't have to face this alone
— I've got you.

December 2025



Holiday Season Real Talk:

Finding Peace When You're Not Feeling Merry



Let's Talk About Guilt

Managing Your Feelings



How To Be OK During This Time

You have options. Yes, you do!



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Holiday Season Real Talk:

Finding Peace When You're Not Feeling Merry

The Holiday Season Isn't Always Merry

The holiday season should be a happy time. But let's be honest — not everyone feels that way.

This time of year brings up difficult emotions...

While some people love everything about the season — Halloween decorations, Thanksgiving feasts, Christmas lights, and ringing in the New Year — others dread it all.



For many, this time of year brings up difficult emotions. Some are managing negative thoughts or painful memories that surface every holiday season. For those who've lost loved ones recently, this might be the first holiday season without them — and that reality can feel overwhelming. Others find the holidays remind them of all the people they've lost over the years.

Then there's the family dynamic. Some people are forced to spend time with relatives they don't particularly enjoy — those same holiday gatherings that are supposed to be joyful can actually cause stress and anxiety. With Thanksgiving behind us and Christmas on the horizon, many are already trying to figure out how to dodge or survive those family interactions.

On top of that, some experience what's often called seasonal depression or the holiday blues—that mix of sadness, guilt, and fatigue that hits right when the world expects you to be cheerful.

Let's Talk About Guilt

Managing these feelings can be hard enough — and guilt makes it worse.

You might tell yourself, “I should be happy,” or “I should be grateful to have family to spend time with.”

But when your heart isn't in it, those “shoulds” only make you feel more anxious or depressed.



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So What Can You Do to Be Okay During This Time?

First, remember that you have options. Yes, you really do.

If spending time with certain family members feels like too much, it's okay to make a different choice.

You and your partner might decide to take a cruise, rent a cabin, or plan a quiet getaway instead of forcing yourselves through another tense Christmas dinner with Uncle John (who won't stop talking about his medications) and Aunt Mary (who watches every cooking show but still burns the turkey).

The point is: you're allowed to do the holidays differently this year.

Having Relationships on Your Terms

Let's face it — sometimes avoiding family altogether isn't possible. Maybe you share a home, or maybe cutting ties simply isn't an option because the relationship still matters to you.

That's where having relationships on your terms becomes important.

This means learning to manage expectations, set limits, and keep healthy boundaries—especially during high-stress times like the holidays.

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Step 1

MANAGE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

If you know someone's behavior is unlikely to change, accept that reality. When you stop expecting them to be different, you free yourself from the cycle of disappointment and frustration.

Maybe this person constantly gossips or complains — you can't change that. But you can change how you interact with them.

Try limiting the amount of time you spend together or the topics you're willing to discuss. Protect your peace before the negativity starts to drain you.



Step 2

SET LIMITS

Boundaries don't have to be harsh — they just have to be clear.

You can set informal limits, where you decide when you've had enough and quietly disengage — maybe stepping outside, changing the subject, or ending the visit early.

Or you can set formal limits, where you directly communicate your boundaries and the reasons behind them.

Either way, limit setting helps you stay emotionally grounded and in control of how much access others have to your energy. Let's say that again! Limit setting helps you stay emotionally grounded and in control of how much access others have to your energy.



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Final Thoughts...

The holidays can be both beautiful and complicated. If you're struggling this season, remember you're not alone — and there's no single "right" way to celebrate.

Give yourself permission to protect your peace, redefine what the holidays mean for you, and create moments that truly feel genuine — even if they look different from years past.



I need a Therapist. How do I start looking?

Looking for a therapist can feel overwhelming. Here are a few steps to guide you:

BOOK A SESSION WITH OAK TREE BEHAVIORAL SERVICES

- Call for a 20-minute free consultation: **(813) 997-3555**
- Visit Oaktree-Behavioral.com to fill out a contact card
- Email us at:
oaktree.behavioralservices@gmail.com

Quote of Affirmation:

"Nothing is wrong — whatever is happening is just real life."

Connect with us:

If this newsletter spoke to you, pass it along to someone who might need it too. And if you — or someone in your circle — could use some support, just know we're here.

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BOOK NOW

