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**CEDARS-SINAI EXPERT OFFERS PRESCRIPTION FOR HOLIDAY BLUES:
FOCUS ON THE JOY, NOT THE TOY**

Los Angeles, CA (Dec. 5, 2008) – In the holiday season’s flurry of shopping, gift-giving, parties and celebrations, it’s easy for the joy of the season to be lost in heightened anxiety and depression.

With so many families struggling with economic uncertainty this year, the seasonal blues can be threatening. Many have coped with the loss of a job or financial instability in the past year, and that monetary strain is bound to affect gift- buying, party-hosting and other holiday activities. Focusing on the meaning of the holidays can help ward off depression and anxiety brought on by the season’s fiscal demands.

“Keeping perspective on the purpose of the holidays is key,” said Waguih William IsHak, M.D., medical director of the Adult Outpatient Psychiatry Service at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. “Remember that this is a time to express appreciation, love and togetherness, and that doesn’t have to mean spending the big bucks.”

IsHak suggests hand-made holiday cards and gifts, as well as get-togethers at home, can be the alternative to lavish presents and parties that sometimes cause emotional as well as financial stress. Buying gifts that put more pressure on your budget probably won’t make you happy, and keep in mind that it’s most likely not the cost of the gift that is important to the receiver.

Also consider the gifts that often mean the most, but don’t cost a dime, suggests IsHak. Spoken or written words can deliver a lot more power at much less cost.

“The season offers many opportunities for joy and celebration,” said IsHak. “The challenge is to acknowledge and address the potentially negative aspects of the season beforehand. By being flexible, dealing with the ‘here and now,’ having a sense of humor and trying to be as compassionate and forgiving as you can, it is possible to have a happy – and rewarding – holiday season.”

IsHak offers several tips for enjoying the holiday season more fully while avoiding financial stress. He has other tips for coping with the challenges for the holidays:

- Track holiday spending. Set a budget and stick to it.
- Let others share the responsibilities of the season. No one person in the family should be burdened by managing the budgeting and shopping, party planning, cooking and activities.
- Make a list, prioritize the activities that are most important to you and make time for those. This strategy will help budget your time and your money.

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- Remember that there is no ideal or model for a perfect holiday. Feel free to create your own unique way to celebrate.
- Don't lose sight of the meaningful moments of the season. Look for them, and be optimistic that you will find them.
- Consider volunteering or making a donation to a worthwhile cause. Participating in something meaningful during the holidays can help fight the blues.
- Take care of yourself. Limit your drinking, try to eat well, and get enough rest. Everyone needs downtime.
- Make an active effort not to worry too much or get bogged down with details. Live in the moment as much as possible.
- Have realistic expectations of interactions you will have with family and friends. Chances are your relationships with people will not have changed much, unless you've invested in improving those relationships in the past year.
- Spend time with supportive and caring people. Reach out to others who may benefit from your support.

To arrange interviews with Dr. IsHak, please contact Nicole White, media specialist, at nicole.white@cshs.org or at (310) 423-5215.

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