

# Holidays not so bright for some

November 18 2010, By Len Kaye

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For most people, the holiday season is traditionally a time for giving thanks and celebrating, but for many, holidays can be lonely, discouraging times of isolation.

Homebound elders, people with debilitating health issues, newly divided families or people who have recently lost a loved one are among the many who may feel they have little to celebrate with friends and [family members](#).

Len Kaye, professor of social work and director of the University of Maine Center on Aging, and Nancy Webster, a Bangor child and adolescent psychotherapist and University of Maine adjunct faculty member in social work, are available to offer tips and advice to help keep elders, shut-ins, children and others safe, connected and engaged during the holidays.

“The holidays can bring back memories of healthier, more active, more socially enriched times in the lives of older adults and can underscore some of the harsher realities of aging including, physical decline, loss of loved ones – including [family](#) and friends – increased economic difficulty and – above all – a sense of separation or [isolation](#) from the hustle and bustle of daily life,” Kaye says.

In the case of families that have experienced death or divorce, family gatherings don’t necessarily mitigate loneliness, says Webster. “Holidays can exacerbate loneliness,” she says.

Being surrounded by family or friends can even make a depressed person, young or old, feel like just a face in a crowd. In the case of a divided family, children's loyalty to their parents can become an issue when they must decide in which home to spend a holiday.

“Very often, the children love both parents and don't understand why it has to be so rigidly defined,” she says.

Kaye and Webster are available to discuss some relatively simple and straightforward strategies for family and friends to help protect loved ones in need of support from additional stress and discouragement during traditional times of familial camaraderie.

Provided by University of Maine

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