

will work for them in the long run.

They are confused and unsure of when and how to assert themselves, how to change the patterns they are caught up in. For these people, the holidays can be a time of mood swings and emotional turmoil, although this need not be the case.

If you suffer from low self-esteem or feel conflicted about the holidays, you can choose to begin to take control of your life now. Knowing where to start might make the difference. Although difficult to do, the following suggestions might help maintain your equilibrium:

1. Set boundaries and priorities for yourself beforehand. You have the right to make these choices for yourself.

- Decide how much you will spend and who and what you will spend it on based on what you actually have. Don't use credit cards unless you plan to have extra money coming in. You only put yourself in a financial hole for the new year.

- Announce to family members and friends that you need to cut back financially (if you do) and would like them to do the same where you are concerned.

- Decide how much time you will devote to holiday planning and activities. You might decide one or two activities a week is as much as you can do.

- Decide who you really want to spend time with and who you do not. If you come from a dysfunctional home where negative feelings still exist or negative experiences still occur, determine to limit time with those who contributed to your pain. Make alternative plans, if necessary.

- Decide what holiday traditions you will observe or participate in, whether they revolve around decorating, baking, religious activities or entertaining. Be realistic about the time and energy you will have to devote to these things.



them, and the recipients will have more time to read and enjoy them.

7. If your holidays are always too hectic, think of a few things you could forego this year.

8. Don't be a perfectionist. You don't have to have most unique gift, the most tasty dish, the best decorations. Relax and it will be more fun.

9. Respect the goals and boundaries set by others. **JM**

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2. Set goals around food, exercise and rest. Don't be black and white. Your exercise schedule and your amount of food consumption might vary from a normal month. Think about it ahead of time and again each week, so you will be conscious of what you are doing. Try to get as much rest as possible.

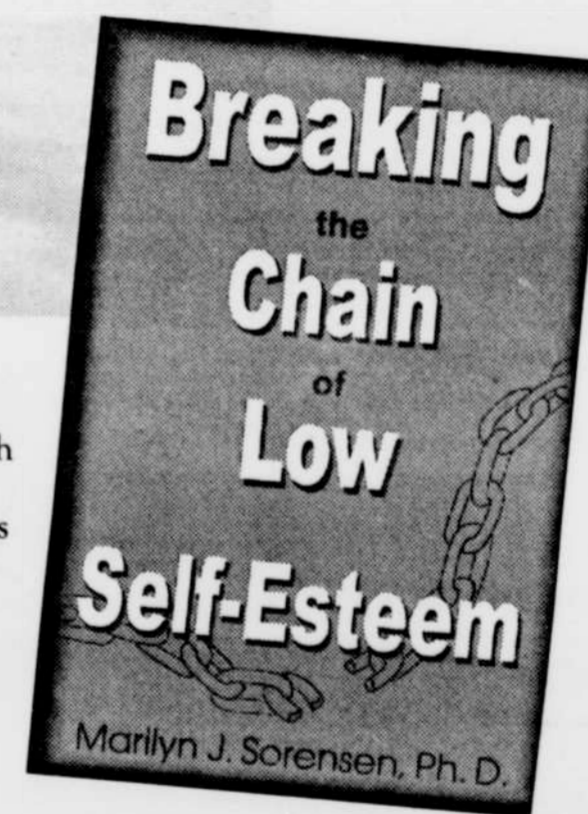
3. Decide you are going to be assertive and stick to your plan. Tell others what changes you are making so they can alter their expectations.

4. Determine not to spend time with people

who are not supportive and encouraging in your life.

5. Initiate a discussion with your partner about goals and boundaries before the holidays arrive. Strive to support each other in achieving success.

6. Send "After-Christmas Cards" instead of during the season. You will have more energy and time to prepare



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