

LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success.

Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more satisfying life.



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Single for the Holidays

Making any major life change brings with it a fair dose of stress. And even the holidays that you enjoy the most can be pretty demanding. Add the two together and you'll see why so many folks have shared with me that being single (and particularly being newly-single) can be particularly difficult during the holidays.

This LifeMap is not a commercial for being either single or being coupled. There are both happy and unhappy people in both situations. Regardless of why someone is single (by choice or otherwise) the ubiquity of seasonal movies, TV specials, entire cable networks devoted to the "Ho-Ho-Holidays" (not to mention the tsunami of print and electronic ads that now start right after Labor Day) all contribute to a sense of "otherness" that can make one feel sad or lonely. Parties and other social events seem populated by a world of couples leaving singles feeling like the "odd man out" or the "third wheel". If you're not used to doing things by yourself it can take a huge amount of gumption to go solo. Intellectually we know that not all families are as warm and supportive as the Waltons or even the Adams Family. When feeling down it's hard to come up with positive-minded approaches to the source of our discomfort. But that is just what is required. How?

We behave as a result of how we think and how we choose to behave. I often abbreviate this with the easy to remember phrase "my attitude drives my actions". It's pretty simple really. If how you think about (or see or perceive) a topic is faulty, makes you feel bad, or is just plain unhelpful you must think about it in a different way. If you have learned unhelpful patterns of behavior you need to unlearn them by replacing them with better coping skills and behaviors

behavior you need to unlearn them by replacing them with better coping skills and behaviors and, thus, learn to enjoy your life more. I have shared this approach with hundreds of people over 40 years of practice. Here are some of the ways they have put them to work in their lives.

Paths Forward

- **Face the Facts.**

Don't deny reality. If you are going to be alone for the holiday decide on your own how you want to spend it. If your family makes you stressed at the holiday decide how you will or will not interact with them. Think ahead to how you will answer any insensitive, impolitic or rude questions that may arise from your choices.

- **Have a Plan.**

If the holiday schedule last more than a day have a plan for each day. Don't leave yourself up in the air. Use the local paper, other publications and the web to discover options you hadn't thought of on our own.

- **What Do You Like About This Holiday?**

Is it music, decorations, food, the outdoors, the movies, the civic events, the spiritual elements? Put a list together of the things *you* want to celebrate. Later you can choose *how* to do them.

- **Throw Your Own Party.**

If attending a party or social event alone is still difficult invite some like-minded-friends over for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres or a cookie bake with hot chocolate or a potluck or brunch or to attend some holiday event together.

- **Start Your Own Traditions.**

Adapt old rituals you've enjoyed in the past to your current status. Get out of your comfort zone and try some new rituals to add to your holiday agenda.

- **Family Is As Family Does.**

If your family or ex-family stresses you out consider if you want to avoid *all* of your family or ex-family. You might be surprised how much a cousin or ex-in-law would be pleased to hear from or see you over the holidays.

- **Where Else Do You Belong?**

If your work group, sports team, church, civic, social or political group is making holiday plans offer to help organize them and don't be shy about asking to be included.

- **Solitude Isn't Necessarily Lonely.**

Not everyone is comfortable alone but it is something you can get used to and enjoy. Time with your pet, getting a massage or mani /pedi, de-cluttering, curling up with that good book you've been waiting to read or movie you've been wanting to watch, visiting that local museum you've been ignoring, studying a new language for an upcoming trip, meditating, or taking up a new hobby or musical instrument. All of these may lead you to interact with other people but that is not required.

- **Lookout For Holiday Buddies.**

You are not the only person on your own for the holidays. Over time listen for how others spend this time and determine if he/she/they might be good companions for one or another of your holiday ideas. Not all of your friends are fully occupied for the holiday, the holiday weekend or week.

- **Treat Yourself.**

If it is a gift-related holiday get yourself something really nice, something out of the ordinary. A nice watch, a piece of jewelry, classic pen, cashmere scarf, leather-bound journal, 30 year old Scotch, a piece of art. Don't get it unless it makes you smile every time you look at it or use it.

• **Get Into Nature.**

Go for a walk. Visit a local park or public gardens or historical site. Tour local monuments and read the inscriptions. Pet sit for a friend who is out of town. Sit in the park with a coffee and people watch.

• **Give Of Yourself.**

Any place serving people in need such as homeless shelters, food pantries, neo-natal / premie units, animal shelters, group homes, Veterans Hospitals, and safe houses need your help regardless of your skills. The "helper's high" may be all the thanks you get. Big deal. The physical boost, the mental lift and the new perspective on our own life that you get from connecting to those in need is another gift you can give yourself.

• **Dump The Soul Mate Myth.**

Romance novels and second-rate movies have long sold the myth that there is this one perfect person out there for you. What goes along with this is that if this person leaves you in one way or another that you are doomed to singlehood forever. This is nonsense. There are good matches out there, there are bad matches out there and there are plenty of matches out there that are in between. If you are convinced that you will always be single then you are probably going to be right. If you are convinced that maybe there is a good match for you out there somewhere you also may be right. It all depends on how you think about it and what you do to act on it. My last suggestion is to keep a gratitude journal and log in every idea you try that helps you enjoy your holidays. That way, over time, you will be better equipped to celebrate and truly enjoy your holidays.

Suggested Resources:

[How to Be Alone: If You Want to, and Even If You Don't](#)

by Lane Moore and Simon & Schuster Audio

[Solitude: A Return to the Self](#)

by Anthony Storr

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Sincerely,
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