

# Childhood Days

By Mae Taylor

Sometime ago I wrote about going to grandpa's and grandma's, and how I can't get around very well any more. And as I have to sit more, I get to thinking more of the past long ago. How much things have changed since I was a child and growing up. My father's name was Joe Cummins and my mother's name was Dora. My father wasn't a very strong man, he couldn't do hard work. But to this, union were born nine children. Only four now living. Three passed away at an early age.

Back when my father was growing up, farmers didn't have pretty fields as they do now. The fields would grow up with sage grass, which you don't see any more, in the fall when this sage grass gets brown people would burn the fields off. So my father and grandma was burning off the field and the fire got out of hand, so they fought this fire for hours. Father was 18-year-old then and he was sick for some time over fighting the fire. He told me all about it and it caused him to have asthma the rest of his life. Doctors then didn't know what to do for it. There was a plant out in the field that was called life ever lasting. It grew tall and bloom. Someone told daddy to get this and smoke it, so he and my brother, Cecil which was two years older than I, we would go and gather this weed. Mother would dry the leaves, when it got dry, she would crush them into powder. When Daddy would take one of them spells where he couldn't get his breath, mother would put some of this powder in a small dish, light it with a match, it burned slow. Mother would put a big piece of cloth over this and Daddy would inhale this smoke and it helped him for a while. There wasn't but one doctor in the county and his name was George Lawrence. He would ride a horse and go to the home. He had a colored maid. Everybody called him Dock Lawrence.

As soon as my brother, Cecil got old enough, we had to help with the farm work. For mother had all she could do with the little ones and garden. We had old rail picket fences then so every spring Cecil and I would

have to clean out the fence rows and on these old rails were boards and I was scared to death of them. We didn't get to go to school like some children. We would have to miss days and work. Cecil and I would pick blackberries and sell for ten cents a gallon to help buy our school books.

Daddy had a big peach orchard and apple. We would help Daddy pick peaches for people would come and buy them for 50 cents a bushel. So mother would dry peaches, apples and green beans. Back then people never had pretty lawns, for the chickens, ducks and geese kept the grass ate off. So when it got pretty and warm, mother would take a knife and go to the woods, cut small branches three or four feet long and tie them in bundles. She would make two, one for herself and one for me. That is what we would sweep the yard with she called it a brush broom. We raised most of what we ate. Daddy and grandma had a molasses mill so we raised cane and had molasses to sweeten with. Mother would make blackberry jam with molasses. She used to make a molasses cobbler. Also egg butter. She would take molasses, put in a skillet when they started boiling, she would beat eggs and pour in the molasses. Add a little nutmeg if she had any. We didn't know any thing about cake mixes or packages then. Daddy put in a little store at home. People helped him build this store. One small grocery as most people would need, coffee, salt, candy, gum and I can't remember if he had flour or not. A few pieces of dress fabric, men's socks, and at Christmas he got in a dozen dolls that sold for 50¢. They were 12 inches high, so he gave me and my sister one. I'm eleven years older than her. I was so proud of that doll. The only one I ever had and the last. So my little sister soon tore her up and I had to give her mine. I still think she owes me a doll. The way Daddy got his grocery and what ever he had in the store, a dealer would come to our house once a month and take Daddy's order. He would drive a

team of horses hooked to a wagon, and bring his samples. Then when the order came it would come to Brothead to the Depot. Then Daddy would have to go in a wagon to Brothead and get them. It took all day to go there and back. He could take me with him sometimes, there was a little restaurant there where we would eat. I think it was Mr. Frith's restaurant. I've never forgotten those cheese and crackers. The cheese was cut so thin you could almost read through it. But the cheese was a treat then. In the winter if one of us children took the crop, mother would put a shovel of hot ashes on the hearth, set a big onion in those ashes, then

ashes on top. The red hot coals on top when it got done, she would mash out the juice and put a little sulphur in it, and give it to us. She would make us catnip tea. We had it growing so in summer, she would dry it for winter.

Back then the old time preachers walked or rode a horse to preach on Saturday evening and Sunday and maybe get a dollar. And they sure did preach the Bible. Just think what they get now on Sunday morning. Some would go early and ring the church bell to let people know it was church time. So many changes in these years.

Guess I've written enough for now I could go on and on like a story with no end.

## Is it the holidays blues?

How do you know if it's just the holiday blues? Does it go beyond a bit of sadness during the holidays? Is it something more, like clinical depression?

Grief, loneliness, and stress are often intensified during the holidays and can leave you feeling sad and blue. Unrealistic expectations of a picture perfect, Norman Rockwell Christmas; over-commercialization; and the added pressures of shopping, gift giving and cooking may further accent these feelings. Even people who do not become clinically depressed can develop stress reactions during the holidays, such as headaches, excessive drinking, and changes in eating and sleeping patterns.

Although many people experience feelings of depression during the holiday season, even more respond to the excessive stress and anxiety once the holidays are over. The post-holiday letdown can be the result of emotional disappointments experienced during the previous months as well as the physical reactions caused by excess fatigue and stress.

Clinical depression, on the other hand, is more than just the holiday or post-holiday blues. The essential feature of a major depressive episode for an adult is a period of at least two weeks during which there is either depressed mood or the loss of interest or pleasure in nearly all activities.

The individual must also experience at least five additional symptoms drawn from a list that includes change in appetite or weight, sleep, and psychomotor ability, decreased energy, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, difficulty thinking, concentrating, or making decisions, or recurrent thoughts of death or suicide, plans or attempts. Significant distress or impairment in social, oc-

cupational, or other important areas of functioning is usually present as well during major depressive episodes.

The causes of clinical depression vary. It appears that major depressive episodes occur, generation after generation, in some families, but not always. Whether the disease is genetic or not, it is evident that individuals with major depressive disorders of ten have too little or too much of certain neurochemicals.

Psychological makeup also plays a role in vulnerability to depression. People with low self-esteem, who consistently view themselves and the world with pessimism, or who are readily overwhelmed by stress are prone to depression.

A serious loss, chronic illness, difficult relationship, financial problem, or any unwelcome change in life patterns can also trigger a depressive episode. Very often, a combination of genetic, psychological, and environmental factors is involved in the onset of a major depressive episode. The good news is that depression can be treated. A variety of prescription medications and counseling services are available remedies today. If you or someone you know experiences something more than holiday blues, contact your doctor, clergyman, or a counselor. Information is available at your local community mental health center.

If you think that you are experiencing holiday blues or want to avoid them this year, here are some tips to help you cope:

- Keep expectations manageable by setting realistic goals, pace yourself and organize your time.
- Realize that the holiday season does not automatically banish reasons for feeling sad or lonely. Allow yourself room for these feelings and

then decide what you can do to move beyond them. For example, sometimes getting out of the house is helpful.

- Life is full of changes. Don't be disappointed if your holiday isn't exactly like the past. Each holiday season is different and can be enjoyed in a unique way. Try different ways to celebrate the holidays, create a new tradition like doing something for someone else or volunteering.

- Enjoy holiday activities that are free, such as driving or walking around to look at holiday decorations. Go window-shopping or caroling with others. Check your local newspaper or listen to the radio or television for free activities you might enjoy.

- Don't drink too much alcohol. Excessive drinking only makes you more depressed.

- Try your best to pay attention to what you eat. While holiday foods are rich and yummy and you can enjoy them, try to do so in moderation.

Remember to work off those extra calories to avoid excess weight gain that can lead to low self-esteem.

- Spend time with people who are supportive and care about you. Reach out to make new friends or contact someone with whom you have lost touch. Others may be experiencing the blues as well and appreciate your contacting them.

- Make time for yourself. Don't spend all of your time providing activities for your family and friends. Enjoy this time of year in your own way, be good to yourself, even if only for a few minutes.

- If you have experienced a recent loss, accept that your grief may be intensified. Allow yourself to have these feelings of loss, mourn, have a good cry. Then talk with others, establish new traditions, and get some physical activity. Go outside and breathe some fresh air and take a look at nature or telephone someone you know.



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