The holidays aren't joyous for everyone. Unfortunately, for some, holidays can be a lonely time, especially for those who are unable to travel to be with their family, who don't have a family, or who may have recently lost a close family member or friend.

"There are ways to celebrate the holidays to help avoid feelings of loneliness," said Scot L. Adams, director of the Division of Behavioral Health at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. "It's OK to be by yourself."

Tips for the Holidays

• Help others. A strong remedy for loneliness is taking the focus off yourself to help others. Do you have an elderly neighbor who is alone and needs shopping done? Is there a soup kitchen in your community? What about the Red Cross, the homeless or battered women's shelters?

Volunteering can help you have a sense of meaning and purpose. Recognizing that there are others in more challenging situations than your own can help put your life into perspective.

• Stay in touch. If you can't be with family and friends because you're not able to travel, reach out to them on e-mail, Facebook or Twitter. Set up a Skype call on Christmas Day with family or friends. Maybe you have a friend who has no one to spend the holidays with. Talk about getting together and celebrating.

• Reach out. If you feel isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Or visit a nursing home. You will find people there who may have no one to spend the holidays with. Spending time caring about another lonely person will go a long way toward eliminating your own loneliness.

• Celebrate your solitude. This is your time to do what you want to do. Make a favorite treat. Read, play Christmas carols, and watch your favorite movies. Watch Charlie Brown's Christmas, It's a Wonderful Life, A Christmas Carol, Home Alone, Scrooged or any movie that you love.

• Don't drink. Alone and drunk is not a good combination. Chances are that you'll become emotional or depressed. Have some hot cider or egg nog instead.

"The holidays don't have to be lonely," Adams said. "Plan ahead to do things that will help make them a time of peace and good will."

Behavioral health resources can be found at the Network of Care on the DHHS website at www.dhhs.ne.gov/networkofcare. The Nebraska Family Helpline is another resource that is answered 24/7 at 1-888-866-8660.

Support for people with behavioral health conditions is available to help get through the holidays. Call the DHHS Office of Consumer Affairs weekdays 8 to 5 to get information on peer support at 1-800-836-7660.