

Health Talk: Most wonderful time of the year, or most stressful?

Submitted by
Communities That Care of Lorain County

The holiday season is ideally the “most wonderful time of the year.” However, it is often one of the most difficult, and depression is common. One explanation for the “unexplainable” depression is expecting too much. The holidays, in fact, become a time of “too much”: doing too much, eating too much, drinking too much, and spending too much.

The Lorain County Board of Mental Health offers tips on coping with the holidays and managing the potential stress of family gatherings and memories, either painful or joyful.

Checkup from the Neck Up

First, take three minutes to answer the online “How Are You Feeling?” Quiz at www.lcbmh.org/how-are-you-feeling. It is a quick, private “checkup from the neck up” and gives you insights if you are feeling sad, down, or worried, experiencing mood swings, troubled by traumatic events, or even if you are concerned about a teenager in your life.

Dealing with a Loss or Change

The holidays can be painful for those who have lost or are separated from a loved one. Coping with separation and loss is magnified during the holidays. People may feel pressured to celebrate the holidays, while their world seems to be falling apart.

If someone in your life is dealing with grief or loss, allow them to talk about their feelings and memories. Try to get them involved in new activities. Change your traditional pattern in some way: have the family dinner at a different place, or open the gifts at a different time. Create new rituals and family traditions. Don't let a person spend too much time alone.

Also, if you have recently experienced a divorce or separation from a loved one, set realistic expectations for yourself and your children. Let youngsters know that the holidays will continue, just in a different way.

Get plenty of rest, and make sure children do, too. Tired children can become stressed and are more likely to be “moody.”

Beating the Post-Holiday Blues

Once the flurry of holiday activities comes to an end, the friends and family have returned home, and we must resume our daily routine, we may experience post-holiday stress or depression. We feel the loss of increased support we received from family and friends throughout the season. We are no longer caught up in getting a million and one things done, so we need to find things to look forward to in the upcoming days.

If a person becomes depressed or is having trouble coping, at the holidays or any time of year, help is available by calling 1-800-888-6161. More tips for coping with the holidays, plus resources for social and emotional wellness, are available at lcbmh.org

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