



EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTION

MOVING LIVES FORWARD

MANAGING STRESS DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The hustle and bustle of the holiday season is upon us! This can bring immense joy and cause for celebration, or it can bring those feelings of stress and anxiety. For many of us, this is an unprecedented time we have to navigate through. We have to manage schedules, children being home from school, and the financial aspects of buying gifts for our friends and family. This can cause us to feel a lot of pressure, especially because things look so much differently this year. Most of us are used to attending gatherings to celebrate the holiday season with friends or traveling to see family in different places. Now we are expected to distance ourselves from loved ones and are looking at the prospect of possibly spending the holidays alone. Even some holiday traditions that have been passed down from previous generations may need to look different this year. This can feel overwhelming, sad and even make us feel like we are experiencing grief over not having those special moments we look forward to from year to year.

Our mental health is important no matter what time of year it is and it's especially important to think of this during the holiday season. With some practical tips, you can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would! (From www.mayoclinic.org)

Acknowledge your feelings: If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones for other reasons, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

Reach out: If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events or communities. Many may have websites, online support groups, social media sites or virtual events. They can offer support and companionship. If you're feeling stress during the holidays, it also may help to talk to a friend or family member about your concerns. Try reaching out with a text, a call or a video chat.

Volunteer: Volunteering your time or doing something to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships. For example, consider dropping off a meal and dessert at a friend's home during the holidays.

Be realistic: The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children or other relatives can't come to your home, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos. Or meet virtually on a video call. Even though your holiday plans may look different this year, you can find ways to celebrate.

Stick to a budget: Before you do your gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts.

Plan ahead: Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, connecting with friends and other activities. Consider whether you can shop online for any of your items. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for meal prep and cleanup.

Cheryl's Corner of Caring

Tomorrow we'll take time to enjoy ourselves. Tomorrow when everything calms down...life seldom calms down long enough for us to wait until tomorrow. So think of one thing that brings you genuine joy - a real moment of pleasure, then just do it!

"Life begets life. Energy creates energy. It is by spending oneself that one becomes rich."

(Sarah Bernhardt)

Don't abandon healthy habits: Have a healthy snack before holiday meals so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks.

Eat healthy meals.

Get plenty of sleep.

Include regular physical activity in your daily routine.

Try deep-breathing exercises, meditation or yoga.

Avoid excessive tobacco, alcohol and drug use.

Take a breather: Make some time for yourself. Find an activity you enjoy. Take a break by yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that

reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

Some options may include: Seek professional help if you need it. Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Helpful Resources if You Need Additional Support:

SAMHSA's National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Colorado Crisis Services:

1-844-493-8255 Text "TALK" to 38255

Source:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20047544>