



STOP MENTAL ILLNESS FOUNDATION (SMIF)

December Edition



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2023 SMIF Community Outreach Program

WHAT'S DECKING OUR HALLS?

At Stop Mental Illness Foundation (SMIF), the holiday season isn't just about festive decor; it's a time to deepen connections and prioritize mental wellness. Our halls symbolize much more than adornments; they embody our commitment to fostering a supportive community.

The twinkling lights represent the connections we cultivate, ensuring that individuals feel seen and heard within our initiatives and programs. Through personalized support and various initiatives, akin to ornaments, we empower those navigating mental health challenges, offering not just counseling but also skill-building workshops to rebuild confidence and resilience. Our comprehensive approach, depicted as a garland of support, envelops individuals in a holistic network, including educational resources, community groups, and access to mental health professionals.

The wreaths adorning our halls signify resilience and our relentless efforts to destigmatize mental health. Moreover, our unity tree stands tall, representing inclusivity and unity, fostering an environment where diverse voices contribute to our shared mission. At SMIF, this holiday season and beyond, join us as we illuminate lives, nurture meaningful connections, and instill hope, making mental wellness a priority for all who walk through our doors.

HOLIDAY ASSOCIATED STRESS/DEPRESSION

The holiday season can definitely bring about some added stress for many people. There's often the pressure to create the perfect celebration, manage finances for gifts, navigate family dynamics, and handle increased social activities. Finding ways to manage this stress can help. Have you thought about strategies to ease the holiday pressure?

WARNING SIGNS FOR STRESS

Stress can manifest in various ways, and being aware of warning signs is important for early intervention. Physical signs might include headaches, muscle tension, fatigue, or changes in sleep or appetite. Emotionally, you might notice increased irritability, anxiety, or feeling overwhelmed. Behavioral signs could involve social withdrawal, increased substance use, or difficulty concentrating. Recognizing these signs early can help in taking proactive steps to manage stress.

WHAT IS HOLIDAY ANXIETY?

Holiday anxiety refers to feelings of stress, worry, or unease that individuals might experience during the holiday season. It's often triggered by various factors associated with this time of year.

HOW TO COPE WITH HOLIDAY STRESS

Here are the top five strategies to cope with holiday stress:

1. **Plan and Prioritize:** Create a realistic plan, prioritize tasks, and avoid overcommitting. This helps manage time and expectations.
2. **Practice Self-Care:** Prioritize your well-being with activities like exercise, meditation, or hobbies. Take breaks to recharge.
3. **Set Boundaries:** Learn to say no and establish limits on commitments to avoid overwhelming yourself.
4. **Seek Support:** Don't hesitate to ask for help. Delegate tasks and share responsibilities with family or friends.
5. **Manage Expectations:** Embrace imperfections and focus on the joy of the season. Avoid putting pressure on yourself for a perfect holiday.





FOOD PLAN TO REDUCE STRESS THIS HOLIDAY

Creating a food plan to reduce stress during the holidays can help maintain a healthy balance.

Consider these strategies:

1. **Balanced Meals:** Focus on balanced meals with plenty of vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains. Avoid excessive sugars and processed foods that can contribute to mood swings.
2. **Mindful Eating:** Practice mindful eating by savoring each bite, eating slowly, and paying attention to hunger and fullness cues.
3. **Hydration:** Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day. Dehydration can exacerbate stress.
4. **Limit Caffeine and Alcohol:** Excessive caffeine and alcohol can affect sleep and increase stress levels. Moderation is key.
5. **Moderation, Not Deprivation:** Allow yourself to enjoy holiday treats in moderation. Restricting yourself too much can add to stress.

WAYS TO CHECK SEASONAL DEPRESSION

Here are the top five signs to watch for when checking for seasonal depression:

1. **Mood Changes:** Notice any shifts toward persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or a lack of interest in activities that usually bring joy.
2. **Energy Levels:** Pay attention to significant decreases in energy, feelings of fatigue, or oversleeping.
3. **Sleep Patterns:** Monitor changes in your sleep routine, such as increased need for sleep or disturbances in sleeping patterns.
4. **Appetite Changes:** Be aware of shifts in appetite, especially cravings for high-carb foods leading to weight gain or loss.
5. **Social Withdrawal:** Take note if you're avoiding social interactions or experiencing a lack of interest in connecting with others.

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

Positive affirmations are like seeds for your mind. When planted and nurtured, they blossom into powerful thoughts that shape your reality. By repeating affirmations that inspire and uplift you, you invite positivity and confidence into your life. Embrace these simple statements daily, and watch as they transform your mindset, boosting your confidence and guiding you toward a brighter, more empowered future.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR HOLIDAY ANXIETY AND STRESS

Engaging in creative activities can be an excellent way to manage holiday anxiety and stress. Here are some creative ideas:

1. **Art Therapy:** Try drawing, painting, or coloring. Adult colouring books have gained popularity for their calming effects.
2. **Crafting:** Get involved in DIY projects like making holiday decorations, knitting, crocheting, or creating handmade gifts.
3. **Writing:** Start a gratitude journal or write poetry, stories, or even letters to express emotions and thoughts.
4. **Cooking or Baking:** Experiment with new recipes or bake holiday treats. The process can be therapeutic and enjoyable.
5. **Mindfulness Activities:** Try yoga, meditation, or tai chi. These practices promote relaxation and reduce stress.

LEARN TO TAKE A BREAK DURING HOLIDAY STRESS

Taking breaks during the holiday season is crucial for managing stress. Here are some tips to effectively take breaks:

1. **Schedule Breaks:** Set aside specific times for breaks in your schedule. Even short breaks can help refresh your mind.
2. **Disconnect:** Step away from work, technology, or stressful situations during breaks. Engage in activities that relax and rejuvenate you.
3. **Mindful Breathing:** Practice deep breathing or mindfulness exercises during breaks to relax your body and mind.
4. **Physical Activity:** Take a walk, do some stretches, or engage in light exercise to relieve tension and boost your mood.
5. **Hobbies or Enjoyable Activities:** Dedicate time to activities you love, whether it's reading, listening to music, crafting, or anything else that brings you joy.



2023 SMIF COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

The SMIF Community Outreach Program was a three-day Mental Health Community Outreach held from the 29th to the 31st of December 2023. It aimed to conclude the year by fostering mental health awareness and community engagement in a rural/less privileged community during the festive season. Despite encountering challenges such as limited funds, short planning time, and a lack of collaboration with health organisations, the program was executed to the best of our capabilities.

- Day 2: Community Games and Activities
 - Engaged community members in interactive games and activities, promoting unity and fostering a sense of togetherness.
 - Distributed essential items like cooking oil, semovita, rice, and branded SMIF gifts to participants.
- Day 3 - Departure: The project concluded with the team's departure, having successfully conducted the planned activities and engaged with the community members.

ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

- Day 1: Film Show
 - Screened educational movies focusing on mental health awareness and well-being in the community.
- Day 2: House-to-House Sensitization
 - Conducted sensitization sessions in households, providing information on mental health and encouraging open discussions.

GALLERY



GALLERY (CONT'D)

