

HEALTHY HOLIDAY: HEARTS & MINDS

CCYSB YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION



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FOCUSING ON THE BASICS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

When we are doing well mentally, basic tasks such as eating, showering, sleeping, and getting dressed are not a big deal, but when we are struggling, they can seem impossibly hard to accomplish. In addition to the basics, we have other responsibilities in our lives that add additional stress and strain which makes us feel even more overwhelmed. Our brains, just like our bodies, have limits and sometimes it is just not possible to "push through" the more difficult tasks we have. There has been a lot of research that has shown the best way to take care of ourselves and reduce our negative mental health experiences is to prioritize our basic self-care needs.

Tip #1: Breathe

Stress triggers a fight-or-flight response in our bodies which at times can help us make decisions in a crisis, but many other times it intensifies negative emotions like anger and anxiety and leaves us with unpleasant physical side effects such as pounding heart, headaches, and stomachaches. We don't have an easy switch that turns off the stress, but by focusing on our breathing we can calm our bodies. Try paced breathing - inhale for 4 seconds, exhale for 6 seconds - If you need some extra help, download one of the many free breathing apps on your smartphone.

Tip #2: Improve Your Sleep

It is often hard to sleep when we are experiencing high levels of stress or when we're in crisis. You may lie awake at night for hours, battling racing thoughts or wake up frequently feeling scared or overwhelmed. Finding a healthy sleep routine that works for you is super important so you can be more able to manage hard feelings, problem-solve, and stay healthy. Check out <https://sleepeducation.org/healthy-sleep/healthy-sleep-habits/> for more tips on sleep.

Tip #3: Eat, even when you don't feel like it.

Your body and brain need fuel, even if you're not feeling hungry or have the energy to make a meal. Try small meals/snacks throughout the day focusing on healthiest options available.

Tip #4: Move your body

Research shows that just 20 minutes of activity every day can boost your mood, increase energy, reduce jitters/agitation, and make it easier to sleep. Put on music and dance around your room, play with a pet, take a short walk outside or around your house, or find a yoga video to follow on YouTube.

Upcoming Family Event: *Saturdays with Santa*

When: 12/3, 12/10, 12/17 ; 12-4pm

Where: 43 E. Main St. 21157

Cost: Free!

Visit with Santa and take a free horse drawn carriage ride through downtown Westminster.

sending love to



the people
battling mental
illness during the
holidays



the people
feel lonely during
the holidays



the people
who are caregivers
to someone
who's ill



the people
who struggle to
afford a holiday
celebration



the people
who are grieving
a loss during
the holidays



the people
who are spending
the holidays with
people who aren't
supportive

Managing Social Anxiety This Holiday Season

The holidays are often filled with family traditions, get-togethers, parties, and shopping. This can be exciting and joyful for many, but for those who experience social anxiety, it can feel overwhelming and intensely uncomfortable and fear-inducing. Social anxiety disorder is the 2nd most common anxiety disorder in the US, affecting 15 million people each year. Mental Health First Aid has lots of tips for managing these symptoms during the holidays. Keep reading for more!

Plan ahead. Take a few hours to organize your schedule and to-do-list for the coming weeks. When you write everything down and develop a plan, you can help manage feelings of fear of the unknown.

Find your support system. Talk to and spend time with people you trust, whether that is family, friends, or others who have also experienced similar anxiety. If you're nervous about attending a large holiday gathering, take that person with you for support and companionship if possible.

Make time for self-care. Even though the holiday season can be busy, try to make time for yourself and your mental health. Even just a few minutes every day to practice self-care strategies can help manage symptoms of anxiety. Research has shown that relaxation training, exercise, self-help books based on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and meditation are all helpful when managing anxiety.

Ask for help. Remember that it's okay to feel anxious and ask for help. If you don't know where to start, talk to your primary care doctor or therapist about how you're feeling. Use positive affirmations. Give yourself a bit of a pep talk going into any holiday event that makes your palms sweat and your heart race. Recite positive affirmations, such as "I can do this," and "I want to be able to enjoy social situations."

Plan ahead for conversation. You may feel as if people are focusing on you, but in reality, most people are probably wondering what you are thinking of them. People love talking about themselves, so asking questions can help take the focus off of you. Try making a compliment, which can make others feel good, make you feel good, and reduce some stress.

Preparing for a Healthy New Year

"New Year, new me!" How many of us have said this or a similar statement when thinking about the new year? There is nothing wrong with setting goals and making healthy changes, but we often set goals that are unrealistic or take a while to complete which can decrease our motivation to continue with them over time. For some, the idea of setting resolutions can be intimidating and overwhelming. An alternative to doing this is making a vision board. A *vision board* is a collection of pictures, words and phrases that are designed to inspire you towards a particular goal or desire and help you to visualize your dreams. Regular visualization will activate your subconscious mind, and makes you notice things that were there before but that you weren't focusing on. Many people make vision boards with poster board, magazine images, and other craft materials, but it is also possible to make them digitally. You can choose whichever option will work best for you. Here are some helpful things to consider when getting started:

- 1:** Reflect on what you've already accomplished this year. What went well and how did you achieve it?
- 2:** Think about what you want to change. What didn't go so well this year? Was there anything you hoped to achieve but something got in your way?
- 3:** Decide on your next big goal. In addition to smaller goals, it can be encouraging to have one larger goal for the upcoming year.
- 4:** Think about the direction you want to take your life next. It may be helpful to split your vision board into sections (relationships/school/work/hobbies/ etc.)
- 5:** Be clear on your "Why". Think about why you really want the things that you do. Sometimes what we think we want is not what we actually want, so it can be helpful to gain clarity on why we think we want something.

MEANINGFUL GIFTS: A GUIDE

One major stressor for many during the holiday season is finding the perfect gift for family, friends, and loved ones. For some, spending money on gifts can cause anxiety or others may feel overwhelmed about what to get the person who has everything. Others have loved ones who are struggling this holiday season and are lost on how to support them. The "perfect" gift does not have to be expensive and it doesn't even need to come from a store. Research has shown that people who receive experiences as gifts feel closer to the gift-giver than those who receive items/material things. We have compiled a list of meaningful gifts that you could give to those you love this holiday season.

- a baked treat or favorite snacks
- a home-cooked meal
- a handmade scarf, blanket, mittens
- making a coffee/tea date and having a conversation
- make your own hot chocolate mixes or cookie mixes in cute jars you find from Dollar Tree or thrift store. (Bonus points if you invite them to bake with you)
- personalized scrapbook with pictures of fun memories you have shared together
- tie-dye t-shirts or sweatshirts
- send a personal letter/card in the mail
- draw a picture (find a cute, cheap frame to gift it in!)
- clean their house (maybe even help them to take down the holiday decor after the holidays are over)
- free babysitting for loved ones with children
- photo shoot- be a photographer for a friend and send them the images
- make a positive thoughts jar listing the positive thoughts on popsicle sticks
- create a guided journal with a new prompt for them on the top of each page
- write them a song or poem. You can even frame the lyrics/poem for them as a keepsake
- check out Eventbrite.com for fun, free or low-cost events in your area you could attend together.

Crisis Resources

National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:
9-8-8 (Call or Text)

Chat: <https://988lifeline.org/chat>

Crisis Text Line: 741-741

The Steve Fund

www.stevfund.org

Text "STEVE" to 741-741

to speak with culturally competent
crisis counselor

Maryland Helpline:

Dial 2-1-1, press 1

Text zip code to 898-211
or visit 211MD.org

Carroll County Mobile Crisis:
410-952-9552

To access assessment and treatment
services at CCYSB call
410-848-2500 x 1



FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM:

@ccsbyouthsuicideprevention

SEND AN E-CARD TO SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT

Find more on: <https://optionb.org/papyrus-holiday-cards>

THIS HOLIDAY season,
it's OK to do **NOTHING**.
A BEAR spends ALL WINTER
DOING nothing. **NO** shopping.
NO PARTIES. **NO** TRAVELING.
AND guess WHAT?
NO ONE BOTHERS a BEAR.



IT'S OK to do **NOTHING**.
You DON'T have to READ
this CARD IF you DON'T
want to. BUT I'M glad YOU DID.

