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Family Connections

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DECEMBER 2015



The holidays can be a joyful time, offering a chance to reconnect with friends and family. But they can also be stressful. For many of us the holidays bring with them an increase in demands, such as parties, shopping, baking, cleaning and entertaining... to name just a few. If we are also supporting a loved one that is unwell, things can quickly begin to feel unmanageable.

As such, it is the focus of this issue of Family Connections to present possible ways of managing the stress of the holidays. Learning to recognize your holiday triggers, such as financial pressures, personal demands, etc... can, with a little planning and some positive thinking increase the chances of you finding some measure of peace and joy this holiday season.



Please remember that if your loved one is at risk to themselves or others the best resources are your local Emergency Department, and 911.

Other resources available to you are:

Mental Health Emergency Services (MHES): 604-874-7307

Vancouver Adult Mental Health Intake (VAMHI): 604-675-3997

Children and Youth Mental Health: 604-675-3895

Older Adult Mental Health Intake: 604-709-6785

Access Central (Addictions Services): 1-866-658-1221

Please make sure your seat back and folding trays are in their full upright position



If you have ever travelled on an airline, you will have no doubt sat through the safety announcement at the beginning of the flight. Airline stewards inform us that in the unfortunate incidence of an emergency, you are required to pull down the oxygen mask and place it over your face. If you are travelling with children, you are instructed to place the mask on yourself first, and then offer assistance. Why? Because if you don't apply your own oxygen mask first, then you are no use to anyone else around you. In other words, **if you don't look after yourself first, you won't be able to look after others effectively.**

Below, I have listed some strategies for you and your family to try over the holidays. But please remember, self care is something that we need to be practicing year round.

“The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As your family changes and grows, traditions and rituals often change as well.”

Reach out.

If you feel lonely or isolated, connect with community support groups, family, friends, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship.

Be realistic.

The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. 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.

Exercise your brain.

Sometimes the answer to having a lot on your mind is to do something that takes your brain in a completely different direction. Stretch mental boundaries by listening to a lecture on your iPod (https://www.ted.com/playlists/299/the_importance_of_self_care), doing a crossword puzzle, or joining a book club, and checking out the latest best seller. Or take up a new hobby that keeps you active mentally and physically, whether it's gardening or hiking.

Plan ahead.

Grab a calendar and set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. If you are going to be entertaining, plan your menus and then make your shopping list. This will help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. Ensure that you ask for help with preparing and cleaning up.

Learn to say no.

Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful, overwhelmed, and burned out. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity.

Don't abandon healthy habits.

Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Some possible ways to fight the urge to overindulge are to:

- Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't over do it

Fiber can help you feel fuller faster so you eat less and lose weight. Getting enough fiber also keeps you regular and is good for the heart. So in addition to the health benefits, getting enough fiber can result in fewer things to be stressed about! The good news is that fiber comes in many tasty forms, from oatmeal and whole-grain breads and cereals to fruits such as apples, citrus, and strawberries, and vegetables.

- Do your best to stay rested.

7 to 8 hours of sleep a night are recommend to recharge and lower stress. If you're having trouble falling asleep: Don't drink caffeine past noon, Avoid exercise two hours before bedtime, Make your bedroom a sleep-only zone -- no TVs, pets, computers, or other distractions. If these tips don't work, talk to your doctor.

Self care.

Take some time for yourself, schedule it into the calendar! It doesn't have to be fancy, try taking a walk, listening to soothing music, getting a massage, attending a support group, or reading a book.

Being aware of where you are and what is happening right now -- some call it mindfulness -- can help you relax instead of fretting over what's looming on the horizon. Let go of thoughts about the past or future, and focus on the present moment. How does the air feel against your skin? How does the pavement feel under your feet? If your mind wanders, just bring it back again to focus on the present.

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, hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your family doctor, a mental health professional, or walk in clinic doctor, and consider accessing the support groups listed in the back of this newsletter.

Information adapted from:

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20047544?pg=2>

http://www.webmd.com/women/ss/slideshow-revitalize?ecd=wnl_spr_112115&ctr=wnl-spr-112115_nsl-promo-3_desc&mb=oJPh60Eliee3Jrm1DQjmNeHnVev1imbCVpLoaO6RjVA%3d



As we all know, we are living in an age where there is an app for just about anything and everything. As such, it may not come as much of a surprise to learn that there are a number of apps for your phones that can help you (and/or your loved ones) to manage your mental health.



Healthy Minds is a mobile application available on Apple and Android operating systems. Developed by The Royal (Ottawa, ON), the app is designed to help users track feelings, thoughts and behaviours. It also offers 'stress busting' exercises and tips for coping with overwhelming feelings. Connected to a user's calendar on their phone, the app also allows individuals to track how they are feeling over time.



To learn more about the app, or to download it for free, visit:

<http://www.theroyal.ca/mental-health-centre/apps/healthymindsapp/>



MindShift is a collaboration between AnxietyBC and BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services. MindShift is a free mobile app available for download on Apple and Android operating systems.

MindShift will help you learn how to relax, develop more helpful ways of thinking, and identify active steps that will help you take charge of your anxiety. This app includes strategies to deal with everyday anxiety, as well as specific tools to tackle: Perfectionism, Social Anxiety, Performance Anxiety, Worry, Panic, Conflict



To learn more about the App, or to download it visit <http://www.anxietybc.com/mobile-app>

Booster Buddy is a free mobile app designed to help individuals improve their mental health. Designed with the Early Psychosis Intervention program with Vancouver Island Health Authority, the app is available for download on both Android and Apple operating systems.



Manage your personal wellness journey and earn achievements as your sidekick guides you through a series of daily quests designed to establish and sustain positive habits.

Check-in with how you are feeling each day, Use coping skills, Keep track of appointments and medications, Get started on tasks, Follow self-care routines, Increase real-life socialization.

To learn more, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2s7nQ1reXyM&feature=youtu.be>



Need a little more calm in your life? You've come to the right app!

Now available for iPhone, Calm can help you meditate, sleep, relax, focus and much more. By downloading this app, you'll discover how meditation can improve your mood - and your life.

Highlights:

- The 7 Days of Calm - learn the basics of mindfulness meditation in our free introductory program
- 7 guided meditation sessions from 2 to 30 minutes - for whenever you need a break from your day
- 10 beautiful, immersive nature scenes - choose the perfect background sounds and scene to help you relax
- 16 blissful music tracks by meditation music master, Kip Mazuy.
- 50 premium guided meditations for focus, creativity, energy, confidence, sleep and much more
- The 21 Days of Calm - deepen your meditation practice with our paid program available only to subscribers

To learn more, visit: <http://www.calm.com/>



“I recognize the limits of my own endurance and strength.”

Caregiver Bill of Rights

It is not uncommon for family members to want to “fix” their loved one’s problems, and become consumed by this unfortunately impossible goal. Family members can play a very significant role in their loved ones recovery, but they cannot do it alone. As such, the caregiver “bill of rights” has come to be a valuable document for many family members in establishing balance for themselves.

I have the right:

To take care of myself. This is not an act of selfishness. It will give me the capability of taking better care of my loved one.

To seek help from others even though my loved ones may object. I recognize the limits of my own endurance and strength.

To maintain facets of my own life that do not include the person I care for, just as I would if he or she were healthy. I know that I do everything that I reasonably can for this person, and I have the right to do some things just for myself.

To get angry, be depressed, and express other difficult feelings occasionally.

To reject any attempts by my loved one (either conscious or unconscious) to manipulate me through guilt, and/or depression.

To receive consideration, affection, forgiveness, and acceptance for what I do, from my loved ones, for as long as I offer these qualities in return.

To take pride in what I am accomplishing and to applaud the courage it has sometimes taken to meet the needs of my loved one.

To protect my individuality and my right to make a life for myself that will sustain me in the time when my loved one no longer needs my full-time help.

To expect and demand that as new strides are made in finding resources to aid physically and mentally impaired persons in our country, similar strides will be made towards aiding and supporting caregivers.

Mood Disorders Association of BC (MDABC) – Mutual support groups for families of individuals living with a mood disorder. 2nd and 4th Tuesday each month, 7 - 9 p.m., Mount St. Joseph Hospital, 3080 Prince Edward St, Harvest Room A. 2nd Monday of each month, 6:30-8:30pm at Evergreen Community Health Centre (3425 Crowley) .Contact 604-873-0103

Raven Song Family Support Group– Support group for families who have a loved one living with mental illness. 2nd Wednesday of each month 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Raven Song Community Health Centre, 2450 Ontario Street, Vancouver. Contact 604-290-3817

SPH Family Support Group- Support for families who have a loved one living with mental illness. Last Thursday of each month, 6-7:30pm. St Paul’s Hospital, 1081 Burrard Street, Room 2B-169, 2nd floor, Burrard Building. To register, call Kaye 604-682-2344 local 68964

VCH Eating Disorder Program (VCHED)– Family Support Group – for friends and family members of individuals living with an eating disorder. 1st Wednesday of each month, 6 – 7:30 p.m., 3rd Floor, 2750 East Hastings, Vancouver. Contact Hella at 604-675-2531 ext 20689.

Parents Forever – Support group for families of adult children living with addiction. Group meets every 2nd Friday at St. Mary’s Kerrisdale, 2490 W 37th Ave., Vancouver. Contact Frances Kenny, 604-524-4230 or fkenny@uniserve.com

Pathways Clubhouse Chinese Family Support Group – Education sessions for Chinese families who have a loved one living with mental illness. 2nd Saturday of each month. , 1 – 4:00 p.m., Room 345/50, 7000 Minoru Blvd, Richmond. Contact bessie.wang@cmha.bc.ca or 604-276-8834, ext 12.

GRASP Support Group – GRASP offers peer-led mutual support groups for families or individuals who have had a loved one die as a result of substance abuse or addiction. 2nd Thursday of each month, 7-9 p.m. at Gilmore Community School 50 South Gilmore Ave, Rm 207. Please email graspvancouver@gmail.com to register.

SMART, Family and Friends - Support group for family and friends to learn and implement self care, boundary setting, and compassionate communication tools. Every Tuesday 6:30-7:30PM. Every other Friday 6:30-7:30 at Three Bridges Addictions 1290 Hornby Street, Rm 310. Call Oona @ 604-714-3480. Thursday 6:00-7:00PM at Raven Song 2450 Ontario Street, 1st floor. 604-872-8441.

Family Connections Support Group (FCES)—Every first Thursday and third Monday of the month in the CIBC Center for Patients and Families at the Jim Pattison Pavilion, Vancouver General Hospital, 899 W. 12th Ave (behind the Information Center) For questions or more information please contact: isabella.mori@vch.ca, 604 290-3817 or becky.hynes@vch.ca , 604 313-1918

Family Support Groups



December 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	1 SMART	2 VCHED	3 FCES	4 Parents Forever SMART	5
6	7	8 MDABC SMART	9 Raven Song	10 GRASP	11	12 Pathways
13	14 FCES	15 SMART	16	17	18 Parents Forever SMART	19
20	21	22 MDABC SMART	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31 SPH		