



Peer2Peer Lines Newsletter

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Are you looking for resources and support for yourself, your child, or your clients?

Call the Peer2Peer Lines to speak with someone who has life experience in the behavioral health system.

Monday - Friday
12:00pm - 6:00pm
Toll Free - Confidential
English - Spanish
Other Languages

Contact Us:

Family Supportline:
1-877-470-LINE (5463)

Youth Talkline:
1-877-450-LINE (5463)

Children and the Holidays

When families think about the negatives of the holidays, the stress of making everyone happy can weigh heavily. Parents can become preoccupied with providing an experience for their children and sometimes lose sight of how the holidays might stress their children. Because of the hustle and bustle, children can become anxious about what to expect during the holidays because it isn't part of their day-to-day life. Children can get just as frazzled as their parents during the holidays, leading to insomnia, tummy aches, and temper tantrums.

According to deancare.com, the stress from disrupting a child's routine during the holidays can be lessened by recreating familiarity during the holidays for your children. An example may be, taking them to the park to play like they are used to. Inform children about the plans for the day so they know what to expect. If they don't like the plans, ask them what they would like to do and see if that can be fit in for an allotted time. Psychology Today recommends creating a holiday ritual, no matter where you are, each year, that parents and children can share. This will create familiarity and help center children from the constant stimulation during the holidays. Doing anything from lighting some candles to reading a holiday story can work. Throughout this, make sure to address any negativity that might be pent up, and use the ritual to "let it go" directly.

Here are some easy expert-recommended ways to ensure a happy, healthy holiday for the entire family.

•Send Your Own Stress Packing

Kids take their emotional cues from adults, and no matter how hard we try to hide our own stress, they can pick up on the tiniest of signals — a quick sigh or tight facial expression. Check in with yourself to make sure your expectations for the holidays aren't too high."

•Dole Out Holiday To-Do's

"A big source of kids' holiday anxiety comes from feeling like they're lost in the shuffle," notes Jana N. Martin, Ph.D., a child and family psychologist based in Long Beach, CA. But giving each of your children a few special season-centric roles fills them with a calming sense of purpose and belonging.

•Don't Let Hunger Happen

The holiday ham may be scheduled to hit the table at 7 p.m., but if your child's normal mealtime is 6 p.m., feed him then. "Giving your kids meals and snacks at regular intervals keeps blood sugar regulated and nerves on an even keel," explains Shawn Talbott, Ph.D., author of *The Cortisol Connection Diet*.

•Keep Them Posted on Big Plans

Change is unsettling no matter your age: Would you want to trade your bed for a cot so Uncle Ira can be comfortable? Nope, and neither does your little one. So when her life is about to be disrupted, give her a heads-up, but without making too big a deal about it.

•Fall Back on Routine

"Kids crave structure because it's soothing when they can predict what's going to happen next," notes Martin. But impromptu gatherings and unexpected houseguests make sticking to every routine nearly impossible. "Instead, aim to keep at least some aspect of the routines your child is accustomed to," says Martin.

While many of these things are centered around what you can do for your child during the holidays, don't forget to find some balance for yourself! If you have your entire day planned from sunup to sunset, make sure to plan some time for just you because when you are taking care of you can take care of your children.

Source: <http://www.deancare.com/medical-services/mental-health/mental-health-articles/children-holidays-and-behavior-problems/>; <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-power-imagination/200911/7-holiday-stress-busters-kids>; <http://washburn.org/resources/for-families/resources/holidays/>; <http://www.redbookmag.com/recipes-home/santa-season-hl-3>



Family Activities

The Holidays have a way of reminding us how important time spent with our family is! The talks, meals together, smiles, laughter, games and traditions are the ways we can stay connected or reconnect with each other and create new memories. From simply watching a family favorite movie, playing a board game or cooking something together can become a meaningful event to look forward to year after year.

The following suggestions for free activities and events are sure to capture the imagination and lift the spirits of families in San Diego during the winter months.

1. Enjoy free organ concerts at the Spreckels Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park beginning at 2:00 PM each Sunday. The Organ Pavilion features the world's largest outdoor pipe organ, a San Diego landmark for over 90 years, where organists resound holiday favorites, waltzes and show tunes from the organ's monstrous 32-foot lead alloy pipes.
2. See Old Town State Park decked out for the season during Old Town Holiday in the Park & Las Posadas on December 14. Guests can learn how residents celebrated the holidays in the 1800s while enjoying candlelight tours, holiday singers, live performances and complimentary refreshments.
3. Drive to the mountain town of Julian for a warm mug of hot apple cider and a delicious piece of Julian's legendary homemade apple pie. On Saturdays, stroll through the quaint neighborhood streets and enjoy the sounds of wandering Christmas carolers and a living nativity scene.
4. Watch the season sail by at the Oceanside Harbor Parade of Lights on December 14, 2013. The popular parade circles the harbor and features a wide variety of boats and brightly decorated for the holiday season.
5. Enjoy the twinkling waters of the San Diego Bay and more than 100 private boats decorated with holiday lights for the Annual Port of San Diego Parade of Lights on December 8 and 15, 2013. Great views are available on dry land from Shelter Island, Harbor Island, the Embarcadero, Seaport Village, Marina Park and Coronado's Ferry Landing.
6. Gaze up at the massive balloons during the Big Bay Balloon Parade, the country's largest balloon parade, on December 30. Floats, balloons and marching bands are just some of the offerings in this colorful holiday parade along San Diego Bay in downtown San Diego.
7. Experience a white Christmas in San Diego when you make the scenic, one-hour drive to the top of Mount Laguna. Sled down mountain slopes, build snowmen and have snowball fights (weather conditions permitting).
8. Delight in the festive gatherings along the Mission Bay Christmas Boat Parade of Lights on December 14, 2013. Over 100 brightly illuminated powerboats and sailboats parade along Mission Bay; the parade ends with a fantastic firework show at 9:00 PM above SeaWorld San Diego.
9. Celebrate holiday cheer with Christmas in the Park – Poway on December 14. The event features a tree lighting ceremony, visits from Santa, train rides, live music, theatre performances, food, treats, crafts and more.

<http://www.sandiego.org/campaigns/winter-holiday-in-san-diego/25-free-holiday-activities.aspx>

For Resources and Support

If you are a teen or young adult, call the Youth Talkline:
1-877-450-LINE (5463)

If you are a family member or caregiver of a youth, call the Family Supportline:
1-877-470-LINE (5463)

Professionals can call either line for resources

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If you are experiencing a crisis, please call the Access & Crisis Line
1-888-724-7240

mhs MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEMS

Home Office:
9465 Farnham Street,
San Diego, CA 92123
P (858) 573-2600
F (858) 573-2602
mhsinc.org

Peer Perspective

For a long time, I dreaded the holidays. At first, I dreaded them because I felt unsure about whether my parents would get along around the dinner table or if one parent would stay home while I attended family gatherings with the other. As time went on, I got used to the tension that occurred around the holidays. That is, until the tension shifted. After my parents divorced, I no longer had to worry about whether they would get along during the holidays, but instead about whether I would see them both. For many years, my parents' divorce made me feel "abnormal" when the holidays came around. I felt like everyone else had a big, loving family to spend time with and celebrate with, while I sat torn between two sides of family that didn't like each other. During these years, I emotionally withdrew from my parents during the holidays – regardless of whether I spent time with them or not. If I did spend time with them, I coped with the stress by setting my mind elsewhere. If I didn't spend time with them, I told myself that it didn't matter. Over time though, I learned to cope with holiday stressors more healthy. To make sure that I feel happy during the holidays despite family struggles, I do these three things:

1. I make my needs known, instead of ignoring them. If I want to spend Thanksgiving with my mom's family or if I want to spend Christmas with my dad's family, I tell them both.
2. I start fresh each holiday, instead of wishing that my family could carry on with holiday traditions from childhood. I see the holidays as a way to start new traditions and to make new adjustments that bring joy.
3. I make a conscious effort to relax, instead of feeling stressed over what disaster might happen next. I have found that my perspective makes a difference around the holidays. If I relax, take in the good around me, and keep my mind positive, then I have happier holidays.



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Depression and the Holidays

Although the holidays are supposed to be a time full of joy, good cheer, and optimistic hopes for a new year, many people experience seasonal “blues.” The holiday season is a time full of parties and family gatherings, but for many people, it is also a time of self-evaluation, loneliness, reflection on past “failures,” and anxiety about an uncertain future.

Depression during the holidays is not uncommon. Everyone feels down from time to time. It is simply a normal part of life. If feelings of despair and emptiness become constant and overwhelming however, it could possibly be depression, and you may want to consult with your primary care doctor or a psychiatrist. Depression is more than just the transient “blues”. Depression truly makes it difficult to function and actually enjoy life.

Depression is more like existing in a black hole. It is like living with a constant feeling of impending doom. People who are truly depressed may feel sad, apathetic, empty inside and even lifeless. Depression is unlike normal feelings of sadness. Depression overtakes and engulfs one’s entire life. Depression can interfere with one’s ability to eat, sleep, work, spend time with loved ones and of course enjoy life. In truth, depression makes one feel helpless, hopeless and worthless. Depression can bring up intense, relentless feelings that offer little relief if left untreated. If you or someone you know appears to be experiencing depression contact your primary care doctor or call Peer2Peer Lines to get a referral.

Sources: <http://americanlivewire.com/depression-holidays/>; <http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=40187>

Coping Strategies

Stress may be inevitable, but how you deal with it is largely up to you. Here are some ideas to help you create your own stress defense.

- Use your support system – You may feel better sharing your feelings with a caring friend or family member.
- Talk it over with yourself** – We often have no control over the unpleasant events that happen in our lives, but we can change what we say to ourselves about these events. Instead, try telling yourself "I am loved and safe" Practice talking nicely to yourself.
- Don't demand perfection** – Ease up on yourself and those around you – accept that everyone has both strengths and shortcomings.
- Just say no** – Remember, it's OK to say no to requests that push you beyond your limits.
- Take one thing at a time** – Instead of thinking of other things you should be doing, focus on the task at hand and do it well. You'll enjoy the sense of accomplishment and regain a sense of control.
- Strive for balance in your life** – Make time for activities and people you enjoy. Taking your mind off stressful matters for a while can help you keep a healthy perspective.
- Be active** – Walk your dog, go dancing or join a gym. Just be sure to check with your doctor before significantly increasing your level of physical activity.
- Eat healthy** – Some people reach for junk food or turn to other unhealthy eating habits when they are under stress. Reduce consumption of caffeine and refined sugar, and increase your consumption of whole grains, nuts, fruits and vegetables.
- Avoid unhealthy behaviors** – Some people drink too much alcohol or over-eat to cope with stress. Talk with your doctor if you need help.
- Get in touch** – Hug someone, hold hands or stroke a pet. Physical contact is a great way to relieve stress.
- Practice rest and relaxation** – Take six deep breaths. Breathe slowly and deeply in through your nose, and out through your mouth. Use your imagination to place yourself on the beach, or in some other pleasant place from the past. Close your eyes and imagine the scene in detail, including all your senses.
- Learn to laugh** – Rent a comedy video and watch it with others (you'll laugh more).
- Stretch** – Stand up. Raise your arms above your head. Stretch left and hold 1-2-3-4. Stretch right and hold. Repeat the stretch several times.
- Stop smoking** – Nicotine is a stimulant, and it can increase anxiety.
- Seek professional help** – If your stress your level becomes severe, seek help from a mental health professional who can help determine the best course of treatment for you

http://www.uhc.com/source4women/health_topics/stress/managing_stress_tools_and_resources/coping_strategies.htm



Holiday Resources

Bread of Life Rescue Mission Christmas Dinner – Wednesday, Dec. 25th 5:30-7 p.m.
1919 Apple Street, Suite M
Oceanside, CA 92054

Second Chances Bread of Life—Wednesday, Dec. 25th starts about 8 am.
2083 Sunset Cliff Blvd.
San Diego Ca, 92017
Phone: 619-886-4275

Brother Benno at Oceanside —Provides a Christmas meal to all families.
Wednesday, December 25th from 10:00-11:30am.
3260 Production Avenue Oceanside
Phone: 760-439-1244 ext. 106

Salvation Army Christmas Assistance at Chula Vista
Holiday Gift Program for low income residents of South Bay. Pre-registered parents or legal guardians may select from a display of collected toys for their child(ren) 12 years and under on their appointed shopping day. South bay residents only. Must be a low income family with children 0-12 and have all documents required. You must have either California Identification Card or Military ID.
648 Third Avenue Chula Vista
Phone: 619-422-7027

Toys for Joy
Lincoln High School
Event entrance begins at Gloria Street and Ocean View Blvd.
Free Toy for Children Ages 0 to 11
Saturday December 14th from 9 am to 2 pm
Event entrance begins at Gloria Street and Ocean View Blvd.
www.Toys-For-Joy.org
There will be free Toys, Clothing, Books, Live Music, Entertainment, Groceries, Children's Shows, Games, and Free Lunch.
47777 Imperial Avenue San Diego, CA. 92113

Holiday Baskets
The largest holiday distribution of its kind in San Diego County. This unique program creates a warehouse-like "shopping" experience for approximately 1,700 local families in need who will be invited to fill their shopping carts with donated staple foods, clothing, blankets, toys, and much more at the Del Mar Fairgrounds on December 20, 21 and 22. Find out how to apply or how to refer a family to Holiday Baskets by calling the Social Services Department at 760-753-8300.
2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd, Del Mar, CA. 92014
Phone: 760-230-6304

Country Christmas, Mountain Health & Community Services at Escondido
Provides a free family event to celebrate the holidays. Family will be able to enjoy cookies and crafts and a chance for children to visit Santa as well as receive a toy from his workshop. Please bring a canned good to add to the Holiday Basket Program to help ensure a holiday meal for the local families in need this holiday season. This event will be held from 2:00-4:00pm Wednesday, December 11th.
255 North Ash Street, Suite 101 Escondido
Phone: 619-445-6200 ext.165

About Peer2Peer Lines

Our confidential service offers information, support and referrals to children and teens, and to caregivers and family members of at-risk youth. The Youth Talkline is answered by youth and young adults who have real-life experience as recipients of behavioral health services. The Family Supportline is answered by caregivers of a behavioral health service recipient. Peer line specialists work with callers to get help through community resources, programs and partners within each region of San Diego. The service is free, anonymous, and confidential. Callers can talk with English- or Spanish-speaking peer-line specialists.

Live Well, San Diego!



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Mental Health Systems (MHS)

MHS was founded in 1978 to provide mental health, drug and alcohol rehabilitation in an innovative and cost-effective manner. The delivery of services conforms to the core values: Innovation, Dignity, Integrity, Hope, Action and Excellence. "Our mission is to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities impacted by substance abuse and behavioral health disorders. As we do so, we utilize new and creative treatment strategies while respecting time-proven methods of intervention."

Copies of this newsletter and past issues can be downloaded at <https://www.mhsinc.org/peer2peer>