

Your Health

Tips To Manage Stress This Holiday Season

(NAPSA)—The holidays are often a joyous time to celebrate with family and friends, but for individuals who struggle with mental health issues, this time of year often brings unwelcome stress, anxiety and depression. In fact, a recent mental health survey by the College of Social Sciences at the University of Phoenix® reported that 97 percent of Americans believe mental health issues to be a serious problem in the United States.

According to the survey, more than three in five (62 percent) of all respondents said they have experienced a mental health issue, such as anxiety (42 percent), grief (38 percent), a mood disorder such as depression (37 percent), marital/relationship issues (36 percent) or family relationship issues (34 percent).

Although mental health incidents generate high-profile news stories, millions more suffer in silence. The World Health Organization reports that one in four people will experience an episode of mental illness in their lifetime and approximately 600 million people worldwide are disabled as a consequence. While the survey noted that 44 percent of individuals would seek counseling if they or a family member had a mental health concern, others avoid getting the help they need.

“Most Americans recognize the benefits of mental health counseling but may be reluctant to seek help due to financial constraints, lack of comfort level with a counselor or the inability to determine whether the treatment will be effective,” said Dr. Stephen Sharp, a licensed counselor and dean in the College of Social Sciences, University of Phoenix.

The problem is compounded by a global shortage of individuals employed in mental health posi-



People who are experiencing mental health problems during the holidays will often find it therapeutic when they can talk about their problems.

tions worldwide. “There are too few mental health professionals to meet the growing worldwide need. Many areas of our country are experiencing a shortage of professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors and social workers. The human impact as well as the costs of mental illnesses can be staggering,” added Sharp. As more individuals have insurance, the gap between need and provider availability has deepened.

If you or someone you know is experiencing mental health problems during the holidays or throughout the year, Sharp recommends the following tips:

1. Be sensitive to individual responses to seasonal/holiday stress.
2. Avoid stigmatizing and learn to recognize symptoms of some of the more typical seasonal mental health issues.

3. Know your community resources and referral points, and be willing to listen. Oftentimes, just voicing your experiences can be therapeutic if the listener is compassionate and understanding.

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