

Nov 25, 2020

Press Release – For Immediate Distribution

Coping with a COVID Christmas

For those who celebrate it, it's exactly one month until Christmas. But of course, due to COVID19, this will be an unusual holiday season for everyone. During this holiday time, the Association of Psychology Newfoundland & Labrador (APNL) wants to remind the public that there are ways to cope and celebrate the holidays, although in a very different way this year.

Keep safe – above all, keep yourself and your family safe. Follow guidelines from Public Health. Ultimately this is more important than anything.

Be flexible – the pandemic situation is constantly evolving. Be prepared to have to cancel/alter plans as needed (and remember you've always had to do some of this – think of the year your entire family had gastro or flights were delayed/cancelled due to weather).

Watch Your Finances – the impact of the pandemic has had a significant financial impact on many families, with many others worried about potential layoffs, closures still to come. Be honest with family/friends about your situation and set limits around gifts and spending. Getting into shops to make purchases has been difficult for many, so perhaps this is a year to discuss not exchanging gifts, or making charitable donations instead. Be mindful that many families are struggling this year – make large gifts from mom/dad rather than Santa, as the big guy isn't able to bring such generous gifts to all children.

Check your expectations – Most years this is a time of extreme stress as we rush from activity to activity, feeling burdened with social pressures, gift exchanges, baking etc. This is not the year to have a “Pinterest” perfect celebration – decorate, bake or cook with what makes *you* happy, not what others expect to see.

Allow yourself time to mourn/grieve – while we're all trying to put a positive spin on the situation, it's also important to acknowledge and validate that holidays contain many important family traditions and activities that will not be possible this year.

Talk to your kids – reassure them that Santa will arrive, regardless of COVID, although his elves may not have been able to make as many things this year (perhaps his workroom also had to shut for COVID?). Ask about favourite activities of past years, traditions, movies, games etc. Remember that at the start of COVID, many children (and teens!) expressed how much they enjoyed being able to spend more time with their parents, and do things like playing games, puzzles, or teaching parents their favourite video games.

Ask for Help if needed – many people are experiencing the holidays on their own, possibly for the first time. Feeling alone, fear of missing out, sadness can all become heightened during the holidays, particularly this year. Reach out to friends/family and remember that peer support and professional mental health services are available.

Make Time for Self-Care – make time for some health eating, be mindful of alcohol consumption, and schedule in some exercise and other self-care activities.

Create New Traditions – explore new ways for virtual parties/socialization. Organize Zoom bingo, trivia night, or group Christmas singalong. Instead of new socks/underwear in the stockings, new masks for everyone!

Give Back – Focusing on what we **can** do, rather than what we can't can help reduce stress and feelings of helplessness. Shop local, donate to the food bank or other local charities, reach out to neighbours who may be without family this year, go (safely) carolling in your neighbourhood, help with snow shoveling.

Focus on what is truly important/meaningful - Balance. Joy. Meaning. Fun. Rest. Family. Friends. Community. Love. These are what holidays were meant for. Take the time to foster these things in a safe, reasonable, flexible way for you and those around you

When in doubt, imagine COVID as the Grinch and remember the immortal words of Dr. Seuss

“And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow, stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so? It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. And he puzzled and puzzled 'till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.”

Where/How to Get Help?

Immediate assistance is available through the Mental Health Crisis Line (709) 737-4668/1-888-737-4668 or through your local Emergency Department.

www.bridgethegapp.ca

Kids Help Line – 1-800-668-6868

CHANNAL Warm Line – 1-855-753-2560

Doorways Clinics across the province

Psychologists can be accessed through your local health care centre, via workplace Employee Assistance programs, and privately (see www.apnl.ca – click on Find a Psychologist for more details.).

Media interviews with a Psychologist on this (or other topics), can be arranged by contacting Dr. Janine Hubbard at 682-0235 or janine@janinehubbard.com