



Grow A Strong Family, Inc.

Building resilience one family at a time.

Managing Holidays & Family Celebrations

Presented by Mara J. Briere, MA CFLE

Contents of this presentation were developed with support and funding from the Concord-Carlisle Community Chest and CHNA 15 DoN, Lahey Hospital and Medical Center and Winchester Hospital. The contents of this presentation do not necessarily represent the policies or views of either the Concord-Carlisle Community Chest and CHNA, Lahey Hospital and Winchester.

- I. Holidays & Celebrations & Mental Illness
 - A. Overwhelming
 - B. Desire to isolate
 - C. Uncomfortable
 - D. Anxious
 - E. Stressed

- II. Our loved one's needs
 - A. Maintain routines as much as possible
 - B. Reduce stress
 - C. Encourage coping strategies
 - D. "No-cost" gift giving
 - E. Set realistic goals
 - F. Communicate "special accommodations" as needed and as an opportunity to cut through stigma/ignorance
 - G. Be flexible

- III. What do holidays/celebrations entail?
 - A. Change in routines
 - B. Party-planning
 - C. Gift giving
 - D. Food
 - E. Increased expenses
 - F. Social obligations
 - G. TOO MUCH STIMULATION!

- IV. Family Rituals
 - A. What do you want to celebrate? How?
 - B. Plan ahead.
 - C. Share your decision with interested others.
 - D. How do you develop holiday traditions that are as inclusive as possible?
 - E. Invite others when appropriate.
 - F. Take pictures!
 - G. Create memories to strengthen family cohesion.



Grow A Strong Family, Inc.

Building resilience one family at a time.

- V. Finding solutions
 - A. Step One: Identify the problem.
 - B. Step Two: List as many solutions as possible; even silly ones.
 - C. Step Three: Discuss the pros and cons of each solution.
 - D. Step Four: Select the best or most promising solution.
 - E. Step Five: Plan HOW to carry out your chosen solution.
 - F. Step Six: Try it out! Review what happened. Praise all efforts!

- VI. Things to avoid when communicating problems
 - A. Getting angry and upset
 - B. Talking more and listening less
 - C. Not knowing WHEN to talk

- VII. Helpful activities
 - A. Setting specific times for family traditions like baking special food, decorating the house, wrapping gifts or attending community celebrations, gives the person something to look forward to.
 - B. Embrace “imperfect”

- VIII. Tips for family and friends
 - A. Be thoughtful with your invitations
 - B. Consider alternatives to group or very stimulating events.
 - C. Remember the *person* and not just the illness
 - D. Reach out regularly so that there is a sense of support
 - E. Allow them to bow out gracefully

- IX. Tips
 - A. Stick to your “normal” routines as much as you can
 - B. Eat and drink in moderation
 - C. Plan on exercise; build in “nature” time.
 - D. Make sure you have a Plan B and a Plan C in place for the unexpected
 - E. Keep music that you love on hand and listen to it when needing to
 - F. Prioritize your time, activities, and commitments (do what you want to and can)
 - G. Take good, loving care of yourself!

Resources:

Andrews G and Jenkins R, 1999, *Management of Mental Disorders (UK Edition)* Sydney, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Caregiver’s Guide to Managing the Holidays. Retrieved on 11/22/16 from <http://www.caregiveralliance.org/news/holidayguide.pdf>



Grow A Strong Family, Inc.
Building resilience one family at a time.

Community Reach Center (2017) Retrieved on 10/04/17 from
<https://www.communityreachcenter.org/blog/how-to-be-supportive-for-someone-struggling-with-mental-illness-this-holiday-season/>

Fiese, B.H., Tomcho, T.J., Douglas, M., Josephs, K., Poltrock, S., Maker, T. (2002). *A review of 50 years of research on naturally occurring family routines and rituals: Cause for celebration?* Journal of Family Psychology, 16 (4), 381-390.

Healthy caregiving during the holidays. Retrieved on 11/22/16 from
<https://www.mentalhelp.net/blogs/healthy-caregiving-during-the-holidays/>

Mental Illness: Coping with the holidays (pdf brochure) Retrieved on 10/04/17 from
<http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/resources/brochures.html>

Tracy, N. (2012). Helping someone you love with mental illness through the holidays.
Retrieved on 10/04/17 from
<https://www.healthyplace.com/blogs/breakingbipolar/2012/12/helping-mental-illness-through-holidays/>