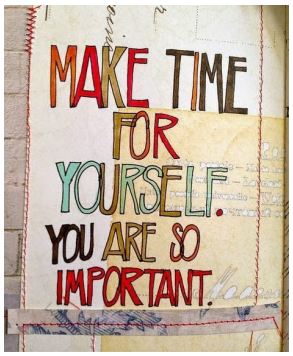
MHA PUTNAM
Mental Health Association in Putnam County

The Mindful Messenger:

December 2021

Take time out for the important things….

This is undoubtedly a busy time for everyone. It is easy to get lost in the hustle and bustle of the holiday season. Make sure to remind yourself to take, or make, time for yourself. Set an alarm for a certain time every day to take a break, take a walk or just have some down time. Many of us have been programmed to think we are "lazy" if we take a nap, curl up with a book, or enjoy a hobby when there is work to be done-either personally or professionally...or both! One of our MHA team members continuously reminds us that "you can't pour from an empty cup". True! Like the oxygen mask on the airplane, you have to put on yours before you can offer any assistance to anyone else. While some may think taking care of yourself is "selfish"- NOT TRUE! **It is necessary**. We have all faced extraordinary challenges since the pandemic began nearly two years ago. Make 2022 the year of you! Resolve to make you and your physical and emotional wellness a priority or a commitment for the new year! Be your best you and invite the people you care about to join you.



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Coping with Holiday Stress

The holiday season can be a time of joy, but it can also be hectic and stressful.

Use these nine tips to calm the pressure.

1. Create a game plan. Spend a little time up front getting organized. Make a list of what you need to buy. Try to shop ahead of time, before things are picked over and you're under pressure. If you'll be cooking, plan your menu. Think whether some items could be prepared ahead and frozen or refrigerated.

2. Make a budget and stick to it. Money is one of the major stressors during the holidays. Don't dig yourself into a hole by overspending. A thoughtful gift doesn't have to be expensive. If money is tight, suggest a family gift exchange with a spending limit.

3. Accept reality. Guests may arrive late. Your mother may get on your nerves. The turkey may be dry. Real life isn't a holiday special. Don't expect perfect decorations, a perfect meal, or perfect people. Try to go with the flow and enjoy what you have.

4. Beware of unhealthy stress relievers. Holiday stress causes some people to fall into bad habits such as smoking, drinking, or eating too much. Think about any unhealthy habits you're prone to and better ways to handle stress.

5. Create new traditions. Stressed out by the usual festivities? Try something different. Instead of cooking a huge meal on your own, make it a potluck. Ask adults to bring gag gifts or have a "white elephant" or used book gift exchange. Attend a local holiday concert, walk the neighborhood to look at holiday lights, or go sledding.

6. Make time for your health. In the holiday rush, don't let your well-being fall by the wayside. Try to stay on your normal sleep schedule and get regular exercise. If you can't find a 30-minute chunk of time for exercise, break it up into three 10-minute sessions spread through the day.

7. Watch out for caffeine and alcohol. Caffeine can raise your stress and interfere with sleep. Alcoholic drinks contain lots of calories, and drinking too much may make you feel depressed. Instead, drink plenty of water or try herb tea or seltzer.

8. Give yourself a break. In the midst of doing things for others, it's easy to forget to take care of ourselves. If you feel stress building up, get away for a few minutes. Find a quiet corner and do some deep breathing, listen to calming music, or just sit. Or throw on a coat and slip outside for a walk.

9. Enjoy! The holidays are supposed to be a time of joy and togetherness. In the flurry of the holidays, we sometimes forget what we're celebrating. Remember to savor the time with people you love, in person or virtually.

National Coquito Day– by Jessica Ryan

December 21st is National Coquito Day. On this day, people around the country are encouraged to try the traditional Puerto Rican drink Coquito. Coquito has been described as the island of Puerto Rico's spirit in a bottle. The name Coquito can be translated to mean "little coconut." Coconut is one of its unique flavors.

Coquito is believed to have been originally introduced during the colonial era to Puerto Rico by the Spanish. It became popular in 1950-1970 when it was published in several Puerto Rican cookbooks, including Cocine a Gusto (Cook to Taste). The modern version of Coquito enjoyed nationally is described as a tropical version of eggnog. It has three key ingredients milk, cream of coconut, and Puerto Rican rum (optional).

Coquito Day was started in 2018 by a company in Puerto Rico that makes a famous rum called Don Q. This date was chosen because it's right before the holidays, making it a perfect day to prepare the drink and make plans to share; with family and friends. Coquito can be enjoyed as an after-dinner drink. It can be given as a gift and shared with family and friends. On National Coquito Day, try a recipe, share, and toast to holidays and traditions.

For more information on non-alcohol, vegan, and kid friendly recipes
Visit: https://www.discoverpuertorico.com
https://www.goya.com

Traditional Coquito Recipe

Ingredients
1 can condensed milk
1 can of evaporated milk
1 can of cream of coconut (most Puerto Rican's prefer Coco-Lopez)
½ cup of white rum (optional)
½ teaspoon of vanilla extract
1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon

In a blender, add evaporated milk, cream of coconut, sweetened condensed milk, rum (optional), vanilla extract, and cinnamon.
Blend on high until mixture is well combined for 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer mixture into glass bottles and chill in the refrigerator until cold. To serve, pour Coquito into small serving glasses and garnish with a cinnamon stick.

A memory & tip
Growing up during the holidays, my grandmother made me and my cousins Coquito ice pops made with traditional Coquito ingredients, excluding the rum. These are simple to make; she would put the ingredients in an ice tray, freeze, remove cubes and serve in a bowl.

MHA will be closed December 20th through December 24th For a self-care/ respite week for all of our staff

10 Top Tips for Self-Care

- **TIP #1** Solve problems because procrastinating only makes them bigger.
- **TIP #2** Turn off the TV/Phone/PC. Make at least 2 hours a day technology-free zone.
- **TIP #3** Call a friend regularly.
- **TIP #4** Swap an hour of news for half an hour of comedy.
- **TIP #5** Take a walk, go for a run or get to the gym. Daily!
- **TIP #6** Eat! Regularly! Nutritiously!
- **TIP #7** Do three things (big or small) for yourself BEFORE you leave the house each day.
- **TIP #8** Take your favorite book, magazine or Kindle down to the park/beach/lake and take some time out to read.
- **TIP #9** Do MORE of what you LOVE- hobbies, interests, sports, etc.
- **TIP #10** Think of self-care. Think of self-compassion.

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Make 2022 the year of you!