

Date: December 28, 2013

Healthy Sunday Topic: Embracing Mental Health

Mental Health
Awareness



It is holiday season again and most of us have been running around shopping for Christmas, cooking, and visiting family and friends. This is the time of the year when most of us are in contact with our families and it is important to recognize signs of mental illness and helping each other through the issue. For example, have you ever asked why Auntie Loretta is always angry and is always shouting at dinner or is always withdrawn during family dinner? Have you ever taken the time to sit down with her and talk about what was bothering her?

What are the Signs and Symptoms?

- Recent social withdrawal and loss of interest in others.
- An unusual decline in functioning, especially at school or work, such as quitting sports, failing in school, or difficulty performing familiar tasks.
- Problems with concentration, memory, or logical thought and speech that is hard to explain.
- Loss of initiative or desire to participate in any activity; apathy.
- A vague feeling of being disconnected from oneself or one's surroundings; a sense of unreality.
- Fear or suspiciousness of others or a strong nervous feeling.
- Uncharacteristic, peculiar behavior.
- Dramatic sleep and appetite changes or deterioration in personal hygiene.
- Rapid or dramatic shifts in feelings or "mood swings."





Elaine Hart-Brothers, MD, MPH, FACP and Board President of the Community Health Coalition, Inc. states, “Feeling sad over the holidays is not unusual. We often miss loved ones. If possible participate in free events at church and listen to holiday music, dance. In a positive joyful way, try to remember the true meaning of the spiritual holiday.”

What Can We Do?

- Finding out if the person is getting the care that he or she needs and wants—if not, connect him or her to help
- Expressing your concern and support
- Reminding your friend or family member that help is available and that mental health problems can be treated
- Asking questions, listening to ideas, and being responsive when the topic of mental health problems arises.
- Reassuring your friend or family member that you care about him or her
- Including your friend or family member in your plans—continue to invite him or her without being overbearing, even if your friend or family member resists your invitations
- Educating other people so they understand the facts about mental health problems and do not discriminate
- Treating people with mental health problems with respect, compassion, and empathy. By giving, you receive.

REMEMBER

Always exercise regularly as this may help in minimizing stress, **B**e willing to ask for help, and **C**ontrol your stress and anxiety by talking to someone, laughing, and breathing deeply.

If you or someone you know is in crisis now, seek help immediately. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a 24 hour crisis center. Other Sources: 1) Durham Mental Health Services at www.dmhs.ca and 2) Durham Center Access 919-560-7100.



Did you know that **Community Health Coalition** is an approved SECC charity for 2013? If you are a state employee or retiree, choose (Code 3770) to send your SECC gift to us! Thank You!

Health Tip is a message from your **Community Health Coalition, Inc.** and is written in partnership with **Central Carolina Black Nurses' Council Inc.**, **The Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Durham and Vicinity**, and **Duke Regional Hospital**.

REMEMBER Healthy People 2020: A Clear Vision to Healthy Living!