



#LIBERTYSTRONG

Newsletter from your Clinical Team

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How are we doing and what would you like to see in the Clinical Newsletter?

We want to connect with you! Please let Angie Huber know what you would like to see in the newsletter. We will do our best to meet your request. Send any requests to aahuber@fcps.edu.

Holiday Changes During COVID- Are you ready?

by: Angie Huber, School Social Worker Liberty MS

The holidays may be very different for you this year with the pandemic. It is so important to be aware of how you are feeling and what is helpful for you and your family at this time of year. Are you typically stressed during the holidays? Is it a joyous time of year or is it stressful and possibly depressing? How do you know when you need a break? How do you know when you need to take time for yourself.... it could be from a holiday gathering, from shopping, from cooking, from work, from dealing with kids or maybe just to evaluate where you are at with everything. All of this is okay!

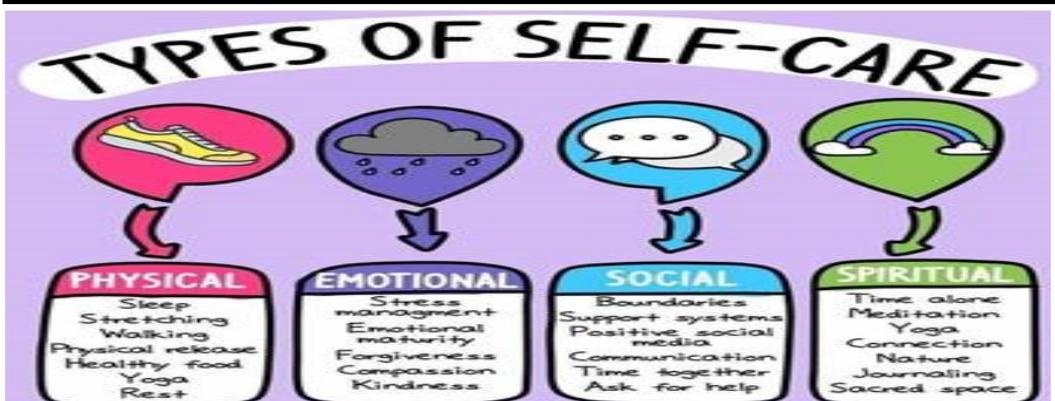
What will you do about the pandemic changes this year? Will you function as you normally do with all your typical gatherings and events? Will they be cancelled; will you cancel them, or will you try to do all of them in some form? What if they are canceled? How will you adjust? Will this be hard for you? Can you find a way to connect with others in another way? Can you keep your traditions going in a different way? What about virtually? You may feel isolated. What will you do?

If you have a change in plans, you also may find that you enjoy some of the changes. Maybe smaller gatherings are less stressful. You may enjoy not having to see unwelcome guests. We are all different, so all of this is okay. It is what makes us different and unique.

Knowing ourselves and others is what helps to lessen miscommunications and other challenging encounters. Tips for being aware and enjoying the holidays:

- 1: Acknowledge your feelings and desires for this holiday season. Focus on what is meaningful to you this holiday season, knowing that COVID may impact some of those plans. Know when you need to take time to yourself for at least 15 minutes of "me time". Know the signs of when you are overwhelmed. When you feel them, take a minute or two to walk away, take some deep breaths and recognize your needs. How can you address the stress to feel better? Know that it is okay to say "no" if needed.
- 2: Reach out to others. You may want to volunteer or find a support group. Maybe you can take a dessert or meal to someone, if it is something you would enjoy. Reach out to an old friend.
- 3: Be realistic, don't over think it. The holidays will likely look different this year, but you can be creative and find ways to celebrate!
- 4: Try to be patient with others and recognize that we are all going through a difficult time, so we may need more understanding and compassion that some may be struggling more than others. Try to find a "good time" to talk about any concerns or grievances and realize that sometimes they must be put aside for the moment.
- 5: Watch your finances. This year can be extremely challenging for many families. Recognize that you may need to do less than in year's past. It is okay!!! Be sensitive to everyone's needs and be wise in your spending choices so everyone can feel comfortable and included.

Cont. page 4



CHRISTMAS LIGHT SCAVENGER HUNT

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All White Lights | <input type="checkbox"/> Star Shower |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Icicle Lights | <input type="checkbox"/> Wreath |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Inflatables | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Star | <input type="checkbox"/> Angel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nativity Scene | <input type="checkbox"/> Ornaments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleigh | <input type="checkbox"/> Snow Globe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Santa Claus | <input type="checkbox"/> Colored Lights |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disney Character | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowflakes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music Playing | <input type="checkbox"/> Candy Canes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spotlights | <input type="checkbox"/> Reindeer |

OurFamilyCode.com

Weekly Self Care Checklist

TASKS	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
showered & brushed teeth	<input type="checkbox"/>						
chose a goal to focus on	<input type="checkbox"/>						
repeated an affirmation	<input type="checkbox"/>						
challenged negative thoughts	<input type="checkbox"/>						
got outside	<input type="checkbox"/>						
was active for min. 20 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/>						
practiced mindfulness	<input type="checkbox"/>						
took time to do something I like	<input type="checkbox"/>						
practiced a breathing technique	<input type="checkbox"/>						
had nourishing meals	<input type="checkbox"/>						
watched and minimized my caffeine intake	<input type="checkbox"/>						
stayed hydrated (8 cups of water)	<input type="checkbox"/>						

ANXIETY-GONE.COM



Flexibility During the Holidays

During this holiday season, the need for flexibility with traditions and expectations is likely to be high. We may need to revise our old traditions or take the opportunity to make new ones. Thus, I wanted to share this article from Psychology Today that may be food for thought during the upcoming holiday season. — Joanna Wheeler, School Psychologist

Article from Psychology Today (Online)

Holiday Traditions: The need for flexibility.

By: Shoba Sreenivasan, Ph.D., and Linda E. Weinberger, Ph.D.

Posted Nov 14, 2016

During the next few months, many of us will be visiting with family and friends and celebrating various holidays. Holidays are meant to acknowledge the purpose of the holiday as well as a time for reflection, gratitude, and remembrance. However, they are also an occasion for reconnection with family and friends, and in doing so they can arouse negative emotions, such as stress and apprehension.

Holidays tend to have traditional components attached to them. For example:

- “We always go to Grandma’s and Grandpa’s house the night before and exchange gifts.”
- “We always watch the football game before we have our big meal.”
- “Aunt Mary always brings her macaroni and cheese casserole.”

“Everybody buys something silly for the gift exchange.”

Traditions where there are few surprises can foster a sense of security and comfort. Such “traditions,” however, can also provoke negative experiences and feelings where the joy and ultimate purpose of celebrating the holidays are compromised.

Ellen looks forward to the holiday season because it reminds her of the wonderful times she had when she was a child. Since becoming a wife and mother, she has recreated the holidays of her youth for her family. Each year she decorates their home and prepares the meals to serve, based on what she had when she was younger. By doing so, she believes she will establish the same traditions that her children can follow and be comforted by the lasting memories.

On a few holidays, her family members brought decorations and dishes they made in an effort to “help” her; yet, each time this happened, Ellen would wake up the next morning with the belief that these deviations ultimately diminished the constancy and remembrance of a long-established family tradition.

Recently, Ellen has been feeling tired. She has started to have headaches when she’s stressed and has developed some physical ailments when she puts too much strain on her body. Now, for the first time, she’s not looking forward to the holidays. She’s afraid she won’t be able to “deliver” what she and everyone else have come to expect. In addition, she’s reluctant to ask for help because then the holidays would not be the same. She also doesn’t want to disappoint her family. Ellen doesn’t know what to do because she believes she’s in a “no win situation.”

Ellen’s desire to keep things as they have always been doesn’t seem feasible unless she is willing to endure physical and emotional pain.

It could be said that Ellen has forgotten or never really knew the true intent of holidays. The decorations, the food—keeping them the same may provide comfort to Ellen and perhaps to her family as well; but it comes at a great cost, and now threatens to “cost” Ellen even more.

This scenario touches on several issues based on Ellen’s desire to keep things unchanged (as expected) and her previous experience when her family members’ contributions strayed from tradition. The issue we wish to explore is that of “flexibility.”

We, as well as Ellen, all need to realize that we are not “Wonder Woman” or “Wonder Man” who can do and be everything to everyone at all times. Even if we are not an overly “controlling” person, we need to recognize and accept that change and uncertainty are not “deadly;” in reality, they’re not even “harmful.” Flexibility—letting go of the “known”—can be a very healthy and liberating approach, both emotionally and physically. It can also lead to very satisfying and surprising results.

Another point regarding flexibility is in the context of Ellen’s situation. Namely, that the experiences we derive from celebrating holidays should be shared and not hoarded. For example, this is not Ellen’s holiday; rather, it is the holiday she and her family and friends share together. Sharing encourages personal meaning for each participant if they believe that that they have a

Symptoms of Stress

Stress is one way that our bodies respond to the demands of our lives. A little bit of stress can be healthy—it keeps us alert and productive. However, all too often, we experience too much stress. Too much stress can result in serious *physical, emotional, and behavioral* symptoms.

Physical	Emotional	Behavioral
✓ Fatigue	✓ Loss of motivation	✓ Unhealthy eating (over or under eating)
✓ Sleep difficulties	✓ Increased irritability and anger	✓ Drug or alcohol use
✓ Stomachache	✓ Anxiety	✓ Social Withdrawal
✓ Chest pain	✓ Depression or sadness	✓ Nail biting
✓ Muscle pain and tension	✓ Restlessness	✓ Constant thoughts about stressors
✓ Headaches and migraines	✓ Inability to focus	
✓ Indigestion	✓ Mood instability	
✓ Nausea	✓ Decreased sex drive	
✓ Increased sweating		
✓ Weakened immune system		
✓ Neck and back pain		

Provided by TherapistAid.com © 2012



[lovetoknow](http://lovetoknow.com)
Advice you can trust
 Logo will not print with document

Identifying Stress

The next time you are in a stressful situation, use this checklist to identify how you respond to stress emotionally and physically.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Racing heartbeat | <input type="checkbox"/> Skin problems such as rashes and breakouts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heart palpitations | <input type="checkbox"/> Hair loss |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sweating | <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous behaviors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gastrointestinal problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Appetite change |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stomachache | <input type="checkbox"/> Nervousness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headache | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgetful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shortness of breath | <input type="checkbox"/> Indecisive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of energy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Urinating more | <input type="checkbox"/> Back pain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dry mouth | <input type="checkbox"/> Neck pain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cold hands, feet, and/or skin | <input type="checkbox"/> Heartburn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tense muscles | <input type="checkbox"/> Nausea or vomiting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lowered or heightened sex drive | <input type="checkbox"/> Belching or flatulence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Panic attacks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger | <input type="checkbox"/> Grinding teeth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of drugs and/alcohol | <input type="checkbox"/> Light headedness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety | <input type="checkbox"/> Frequent colds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Restlessness | <input type="checkbox"/> Increase in allergy attacks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irritability | <input type="checkbox"/> Mood swings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inability to focus | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling overwhelmed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of motivation | <input type="checkbox"/> Suicidal thoughts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depression | <input type="checkbox"/> Frequent crying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chest pain | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotionally reactive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social withdrawal | <input type="checkbox"/> Obsessive or compulsive behavior |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning or increasing tobacco use | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced productivity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mind racing | <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid or mumbled speech |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focusing on negative thoughts | <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High blood pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> Impulsivity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weight loss or gain | |

Created by: [ManuelaHarty](http://ManuelaHarty.com)

6: Plan ahead and find compromises if needed.

7: As with any holiday, try to keep up with your healthy habits- exercise, food choices, mindfulness, self-care, sleep. Limit or avoid any substances.

8: Have an alternative plan in the back of your mind in case there is shut down! With the rising numbers with COVID, we have learned that we must have an alternate plan.

9: **Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Some information taken from the Mayo clinic



More resources that you may find helpful!

The Parent Resource Center (PRC) is excited to offer access to our library resources.

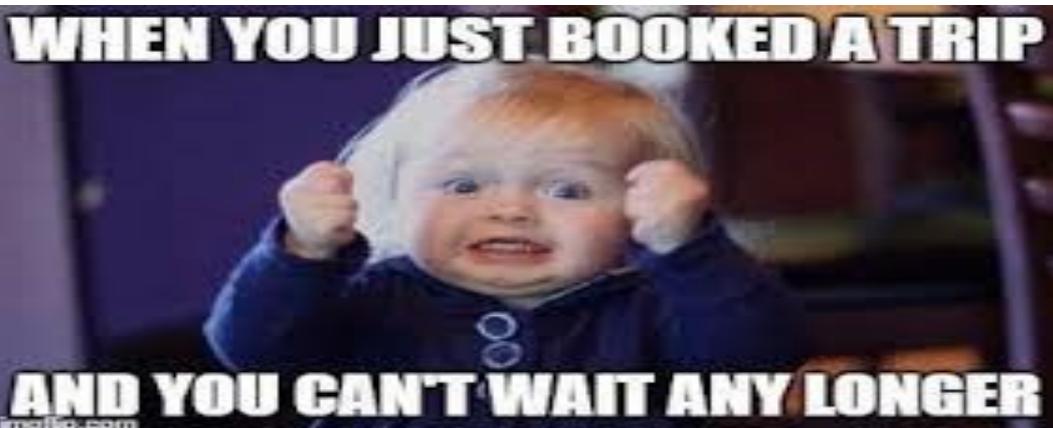
Our Library is open for pick-up, on Wednesdays, by appointment only, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Encouraging Positive Behaviors at Home Series

- 12/17/20: All Behavior Happens for a Reason: Behavior as Communication
- 01/21/21: **Strategies for Increasing Replacement Behaviors**
- Parents/guardians will review methods to increase target skills
- Parents/guardians will review problem solving strategies if target skills are not increasing
- 02/18/21: Teaching your Children to Follow Directions
- 03/18/21: Effectively Communicating with Your Child

04/22/21: Minimizing Prompts and Maximizing Your Child's Independence
Thursday January 21, 2021, 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.

[Register for Strategies for Increasing Replacement Behaviors](#)



For more social-emotional resources and lessons please visit the LS Clinical Team's website (see the link below works best in Google Chrome):

<https://sites.google.com/view/liberty-ms-clinical-team/mental-wellness-topics>

purpose and role. They may not execute their role in the same way as another; but it is their “uniqueness” that gives each member of the group a more enriched, fulfilling, and memorable experience. This in turn embellishes the emotional response for the group as a whole. Consequently, everyone should be encouraged to play a contributing part to the celebration.

It is admirable that Ellen wants to instill in her children a sense of tradition that can be carried on for generations; but it is also unrealistic to believe that deviation would diminish the holiday spirit, meaning, or its memorability.

As time passes, it is inevitable that we will change in some way; yet, the basic values and meaning of the holidays need not be altered. Let us embrace and welcome change. Evolution is essential for our physical and emotional survival. Ultimately, holidays represent an opportunity for gratefulness, generosity, and remembering to be kind and uncritical toward others, including ourselves.

Fun Activities to do during the holidays during COVID:

- ⇒ Bull Run Festival of Lights
- ⇒ Private movie showings at theatres (reasonably priced relative to regular prices)
- ⇒ Scavenger Hunts
- ⇒ Baking Day
- ⇒ Drive around and look at some Christmas Lights
- ⇒ Have a family game night.
- ⇒ Take a walk outside.
- ⇒ Go for a hike.
- ⇒ Decorate cookies
- ⇒ Make homemade ornaments or another craft
- ⇒ Deliver a baked good to your neighbor

Try these activities for your student!

- ⇒ Liberty Middle School Afterschool Program
<https://libertyms.fcps.edu/activities/after-school-program>
- ⇒ Fairfax County Park Authority Programs
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes>

Resources:

If you or someone you care about is in crisis, please call [911](tel:911) or access one of the mental health resources below:

- ⇒ **Reach out to a trusted adult (parent, counselor, teacher, coach, etc.); <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk>**
- ⇒ **Text NEEDHELP to 85511 for the [Crisis Link](https://www.needhelp.org) Hotline at or call them at 703-527-4077**
- ⇒ **Chat online with a specialist at [CrisisChat.org](https://www.crisischat.org) or [ImAlive.org](https://www.imalive.org)**
- ⇒ **Call an emergency mental health center at 703 573-5679 (Merrifield Center), 703-536-2000 (Dominion Hospital), or 703-289-7560 (INOVA emergency services)**
- ⇒ **CR2 – 844-627-4747**
- ⇒ **Go to the nearest emergency room at your local hospital**

Principles of Kwanzaa



Joanna's Favorite Holiday Candy



Potato candy has always been one of my favorite holiday treats. For those of you who do not know what potato candy looks like, here is a picture for reference. This candy is so simple, but I promise it's one of those things where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Here is a recipe for the candy from Sugar Spun Run.



Ingredients for Potato Candy

½ cup mashed boiled peeled potato
1 stick salted butter softened
6-7 cups powdered sugar plus additional for dusting
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
Creamy peanut butter for filling

Instructions for Potato Candy

Combine mashed potatoes, butter, and one cup of sugar in a large bowl and use an electric mixer to stir until combined.

Add remaining sugar, 1 cup at a time and stirring until combined after each addition.

Once you've added 6 cups of powdered sugar, check the consistency. If the dough is not moldable in your hands and can't be rolled into a ball, continue to add sugar until it is firm.

Stir in vanilla extract.

Refrigerate for at least 1 hour (if you chill longer it may become too firm and brittle and will just need to sit at room temperature for 10-15 minutes until it is pliable).

Once chilled, divide dough into two pieces and place one piece on a clean surface that you've generously dusted with powdered sugar. Dust the surface of the dough with additional sugar, and use a rolling pin to roll dough out into a rectangle about ¼" thick. If your dough is too sticky or falling apart, you may need to add more sugar, re-shape it into a ball, and start over.

Once dough has been rolled into a ¼" thick rectangle, spread evenly with peanut butter, leaving a small amount of space peanut butter-free around the perimeter of the dough.

Starting with the longer side of your rectangle, gently but tightly roll into a log.

Use a knife to slice into pieces about 1/4-1/2" thick.

Repeat steps 5-8 with remaining half of dough.

Serve and enjoy. Store leftover candy in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a week.



Angie's Favorite Holiday Candy



Buckeye Fudge is by far one of my favorites in the holidays.

It was the only time of year that we would have a lot of sweets and fudge was certainly one of my favorites! Who doesn't like peanut butter and chocolate. My mom would work hard to perfect the recipe to her taste. Enjoy!



Peanut Butter Layer:

1 cup butter (softened) 3 cups powdered sugar
1 cup chunky peanut butter 1 tsp vanilla

Chocolate Layer:

1 1/2 cup dark chocolate chips
7 oz sweetened condensed milk
1/8 tsp salt
2 TBS butter

Spray 8" square pan with cooking spray or line with parchment paper.

Mix peanut butter, butter and vanilla until smooth. Add sugar once cup at a time. Spread into pan. Set aside.

Mix chocolate, milk, butter and salt in microwave safe bowl. Heat for one minute, stir, continue to alternate heat and stirring every 30 seconds until it is smooth and creamy. Pour over 1st layer. Let set up on counter or refrigerator for 4 hours before cutting into bitesize squares.

Counseling is often a good approach to help people to work through struggles that they are having in their life. Many feel comfortable with the idea of counseling and many do not feel comfortable. One of the benefits of counseling is that it can help you to find solutions or to problem solve more quickly than without it. However, some still may not be comfortable and to add to the challenges of becoming comfortable with the idea of counseling, during COVID, it is difficult to find counselors who are not meeting virtually, as some do not feel comfortable with meeting virtually. A good alternative is to use journaling. Here are some journal prompts for self discovery:



JOURNAL PROMPTS FOR SELF DISCOVERY

58 SUPPORTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS FOR SELF DISCOVERY

- How has your day been?
- List 15 things that put a smile on your face
- Name the top 3 emotions you are feeling in this moment
- Try and name the thoughts that lay behind these feelings
- How do you want to feel?
- What thoughts can you think to support the emotions you want to feel?
- What are you currently struggling with?
- What does your dream life look like?
- Write down 3 things you are grateful for
- What made you last laugh?
- Who can you reach out to today, someone that always makes you feel good?
- What does happiness mean to you?
- What does success mean to you?
- List 2 memories that you cherish the most
- List your top 3 fears and the reason behind them
- Do you care about what other people think about you? Why is that?
- What are your top goals in life?
- How are you moving forward with your goals?
- How can you improve your time management so you can be more productive?
- Any future plans that fill you up with butterflies?
- Who and what inspires you? Why?
- What can you do to make today/tomorrow AMAZING?
- Anything you have not forgiven yourself for?
- What is your favorite season of the year? Why?
- What does a dream day in the life look like?
- Does your morning routine support your dream life?
- Favorite childhood memory
- What can you do today to check one of those things off your list?
- List 5 places you want to travel to
- What are your biggest strengths?
- Write about a moment you were brave and just went for it
- When do you feel most comfortable and happy in your own skin?
- List the challenges you faced today
- Write about your first experience with love
- How do you practice self-care?
- What did you say no to today? How did that make you feel?
- What did you say yes to today? How did that make you feel?

She dreams All Day, Pinterest

Easy Gifts Ideas or Just for Fun

- Salt Scrubs
- Homemade Ornaments (i.e. Salt Dough Ornaments are my favorite)
- Coffee Mug Mixers (i.e. spoons dipped in chocolate and other goodness that you stir into your coffee)
- Make favored cooking salts (i.e. think lime-ginger salt, paprika salt etc.)

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