



Dec. 11, 2022

Contact: Sydney Trexler
Marketing & Outreach Coordinator
704-878-7738
sydney.trexler@iredellhealth.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tips for Handling Holiday Stress and Grief

Iredell County, NC – If the holiday season is supposed to be the most “wonderful time of the year,” then why does it bring us so much stress?

It’s no secret that while the holidays are merry and joyful, they can quickly become overwhelming and stressful. In fact, last year, American Psychiatric Association polled over 2,000 adults, of which 41% reported an increase in worrying during the holiday season. This year, 31% said they felt even more stressed than last year.

So what’s the reason for this stressful season?

“We overspend, we overcommit, we over, over, and over some more. And then, before we know it, January is here, and we are trying to declutter and simplify as we pack it all up for the year,” said Amy Brant, wellness nurse and diabetes program manager for the Iredell Wellness & Diabetes Center.

“You may also place massive expectations on yourself to be the star entertainer and appear to have it all together during the holidays. You may try to seek perfection in every detail and are essentially wanting to be the Picture-Perfect-Pinterest-Party-Planner,” she added.

Budgeting for gifts, balancing social commitments, pressures at work, or tension between family members can all contribute to holiday stress. And in the middle of all the hustle and bustle, you may find sadness, loneliness, or grief.

To begin processing this grief and sadness, you must first recognize what is causing your feelings. Maybe you are feeling lonely, left out, or dealing with losing a loved one. Or, you may just be missing the way things used to be.

“Then, we need to ask ourselves, ‘Is this controllable? Do I have any ability to change this?’ Many times that answer is no. If your answer is yes, then you need a plan. If your answer is no, then you need a plan. The ‘yes plan’ will most likely require communication, while the ‘no plan’ will require you to process this and find a way to move forward,” said Brant. “Healing from our pain is possible. Not easy, but possible.”

When you start to feel the sadness creeping in and putting a damper on your holiday plans, Brant recommends doing these four steps:

1. Recognize the issue
2. Acknowledge your feelings
3. Determine if the outcome you want is feasible
4. Make a plan to either rectify the situation or process it and move forward toward healing

“The moving forward toward healing part is usually where we get stuck. We get so wrapped up in our emotions that we become more irritable, we stress-eat to find comfort, or we bury it all deep inside and try to hold our head high as our sadness festers and eventually leads us to depression,” said Brant.

Moving forward while you’re stressed, sad, or grieving is difficult for anyone. To help you, Brant offers a few tips.

Write it out – Put pen to paper and write out everything you are feeling. You may find a perspective you did not see before.

“Get a journal and write your story. Write your pain. Write your prayers. Write your fears and your failures, your heart and your desires,” she said.

Talk it out – If writing isn’t for you, try talking about your feelings.

“Talk it out with... yourself. Find somewhere you can be alone. Go for a walk or sit in your car. Hearing the words of your thoughts out loud offers healing power,” said Brant.

Seek help – Reach out to a friend or a loved one for emotional support and guidance. And, if stress is making it hard for you to function, do not be afraid to reach out to a professional.

“Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical ailments, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or mental health professional. There are always resources. Don’t be afraid to use them,” said Brant.

To help your overall health throughout the holiday season, Brant offers the following tips:

1. Have a healthy snack before holiday meals so you do not overindulge on sweets, cheese, or drinks.
2. Try to eat healthy meals.
3. Get plenty of sleep.
4. Include regular physical activity in your daily routine.

5. Try deep-breathing exercises, meditation, or yoga.
6. Avoid excessive tobacco, alcohol, and drug use.
7. Be aware of how the information culture can produce undue stress, and adjust the time you spend reading news and social media as you see fit.
8. Take a breather. Make some time for yourself, and find an activity you enjoy. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle all your tasks. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing, and restoring your inner calm.

About Iredell Health System

Iredell Health System includes Iredell Memorial Hospital; Iredell Mooresville; Iredell Home Health; Iredell Wound Care & Hyperbaric Center; Community and Corporate Wellness; Occupational Medicine; the Iredell Physician Network and more. Iredell Memorial Hospital is the largest and only nonprofit hospital in Iredell County. The comprehensive healthcare facility has 247 beds; more than 1,800 employees; and has 260 physicians representing various specialties. Centers of excellence include Women's and Children's; Cardiovascular; Cancer; Surgical Services and Wellness & Prevention. The Health System's newest campus, Iredell Mooresville, is home to the area's only 24-hour urgent care facility, as well as an ambulatory surgery center, imaging center, rehabilitation services, and physician practices. The mission of Iredell Health System is to inspire wellbeing. For a comprehensive list of services and programs, visit www.iredellhealth.org.

###