

## This is the Season of Holiday Stress



**R**egardless of what holiday people may celebrate, December is a very busy time of the year. For many people the holidays are a time of joyous celebration where they look forward to spending time with family and friends, gift giving, and religious services. But for other people it can be a stressful and anxiety-provoking time, leaving them feeling like they need a holiday to recover from the holidays.

Too much stress, even for just a couple of weeks can have a negative impact on a person's mental health. The usual ways of coping with stress, such as exercise, healthy eating, and relaxation are important activities to start or continue during the holidays.

### Here are ten tips to help you manage holiday stress.

- **Remember what the holiday season means to you.** While holiday advertising creates a picture that the holidays are about shiny new toys and gift giving, remember that this season is really about sharing and time spent with loved ones.
- **Set your priorities.** Before too many activities overwhelm you, it's important to decide which traditions have a positive impact on your well-being then eliminate those that don't.
- **Ask for help.** Have a "family meeting" and make a commitment to share tasks.
- **Beware of overindulgence.** Alcohol is a depressant so try to keep consumption to a minimum. Too much food can make you feel lethargic, tired and even less able to keep up a busy pace.

### Mindful Minute

It is hard to feel stressed when you are laughing. Laughter lowers stress hormones and boosts your immune system. Find ways to laugh and watch your stress melt away. Read the comics or a funny book. Watch your favourite comedy show. Or register for a yoga laughter workshop and laugh yourself silly.

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# talk

## cmha toronto

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- **Relax...Breathe...Enjoy!** This sounds so simple, but sometimes we forget to take deep breaths and give our bodies the oxygen we need. Remember to take time to do things you enjoy like exercising, listening to music or meditation that will serve as much-needed breaks during the hectic weeks of the holidays.
- **Stay within budget.** Finances are a great stressor so set a budget and stick with it.
- **Put fun and "break time" into your holidays.** Fun or silly activities, games or movies that make you laugh, hugs, playing with pets, and quiet time alone or with a partner are all good ways to reduce stress.
- **Learn about others.** Attend diverse cultural events with family and friends. Help out at a local food bank or donate clothing and toys to families in need so that they can enjoy a happy holiday season. It's a good feeling to give to others.
- **Include others.** If you don't have many family members or close friends nearby, reach out to neighbours. Find ways to spend the holidays with other people. If you're part of a family gathering, invite someone you know who is alone to your gathering.
- **Get into the light.** Research suggests that elevated depression around this time of year can have a lot to do with the weather, and the lack of daylight which can lead to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). So soak up the sun when you can. If your dampened mood persists for weeks into the New Year, consider a visit to your physician or mental health professional.

**CMHA Toronto wishes you and your family a very happy holiday season and a safe and healthy new year.**



CANADIAN MENTAL  
HEALTH ASSOCIATION  
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE  
POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Toronto Branch

## Hugs for the Holidays

**R**eceiving a hug can make almost anyone feel better. A study released last year found that hugs can improve a person's frame of mind, and people who receive a regular dose of hugs are more likely to experience better mental health. Hugs, whether they are little hugs, big hugs, bear hugs or long cuddles can change a day, an hour, or a minute from one that is dark and gloomy to one that is bright and sunny.

We know that social inclusion and the sense of belonging are critical for people living with serious mental health challenges. At the heart of CMHA Toronto's Holiday Gift Program is a commitment to embrace people who, because of their mental illness, are alone during the holiday season.

For 54 years, CMHA Toronto has remembered those with mental health issues, providing more than 5,300 gifts of much-needed warm clothing and personal items at the holiday season, sending a message that they do belong, that they are cared for and that they matter.

It takes 800 boxes to distribute 5,300 "hugs". With the items in these boxes CMHA Toronto reaches out to those affected by serious mental health issues and lets them know that they are not forgotten this holiday season. From these boxes we give hugs to people in need.

### Our hugs include:

- 5200 warm sweaters;
- 7668 personal care items such as shampoo, body lotion and soap; and
- 132 gifts for children and youth.

These Holiday Gift hugs really do help people feel like they belong to a caring community. In their own words, here is a small sampling of what gift recipients have told us:



*"It helps to make the holiday season easier to bear with no family close to me."*

*"Makes me feel a part of a group of people that cares."*

*"Gives me more inner peace."*

In order to get these hugs out of the boxes and to the people living with serious mental health issues it takes hundreds of volunteer hours and incredible donors. Thank you to everyone who helps to make the Holiday Gift Program possible.

***Embrace the Season of Belonging  
and help us to give hugs to those in need.  
Please donate to the Holiday Gift Program.***

To donate call us at (416) 789-7957 or go to [www.toronto.cmha.ca](http://www.toronto.cmha.ca)

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## What's Coming Up!

**108 Sun Salutations:** January 1st, 2011 – A Yoga Fundraiser with proceeds going to CMHA Toronto. For more info visit our website at [www.toronto.cmha.ca](http://www.toronto.cmha.ca)

## Workshops

**Face to Face:** Understanding Mental Illness: February 16, 2011 at 9am-4pm Cost \$95

**ASIST:** Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training: March 30 -31, 2011 at 9am – 5pm Cost \$190

*For more information on any of these events call us at (416) 789-7957.*

