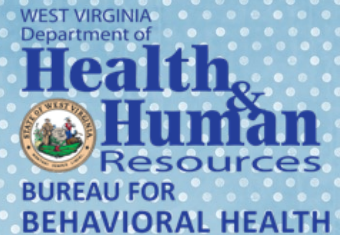


Family Connections

December 2023/ISSUE XIII

News for Families from the Bureau for Behavioral Health's
Office of Children, Youth, and Families



'Tis the Season for SAD

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that occurs during certain times of the year — most often in fall or winter — when shorter days and less daylight may reduce levels of the brain chemical serotonin. About five percent of adults in the U.S. experience SAD, which typically lasts about 40 percent of the year, according to the [American Psychiatric Association](#). Read more about SAD [here](#).

Short of SAD, individuals may feel overwhelmed and stressed during the holidays. Grief, strained family relationships, and other challenges can affect mental health. If you are struggling, please remember that you are not alone. Try practicing self-care with tips from [NAMI](#) and [Harvard Health](#).

If you feel overwhelmed, please know that you are not alone, and help is available. To get connected with behavioral health services for all ages in West Virginia, call, chat, or text 1-844-HELP4WV, www.help4wv.com. Nationwide, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a 24/7, universal entry point to reach a caring, trained counselor who can confidentially help you or your loved one experiencing mental health-related distress. Read more about 988 [here](#).

HOLIDAY EDITION



Spotlight on the Mountain State Parent-Child Adolescent Network (MSP-CAN)

The Mountain State Parent-Child Adolescent Network ([MSP-CAN](#)) supports parents and caregivers of children and youth who have emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges. MSP-CAN aims to help families remain together, and children stay safely in their homes, schools, and communities. Advocacy, referrals, and support are provided by parents and caregivers with lived experience raising their own children with mental health challenges who understand the unique challenges families may be facing. The MSP-CAN network also sponsors the education and training of parents and provides instruction to parents so they can become trainers themselves.

Learn more about MSP-CAN at www.msp-can.org.



Take a moment.
Take a deep breath.

Take care of
YOU

this holiday season.



Recipes

Peppermint Hot Chocolate

Ingredients

1 1/2 cups heavy cream
1 1/2 cups milk
1/4 cup sugar
1/8 teaspoon salt
6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
3 drops peppermint oil
Sweetened whipped cream, for garnish
Chocolate shavings, for garnish

Directions

In a saucepan, combine the cream, milk, sugar, and salt and heat over medium-low heat. When the cream mixture just begins to steam, add the chopped chocolate and stir until melted. Stir in the peppermint oil. Divide the hot chocolate among mugs and top with whipped cream and chocolate shavings. (foodnetwork.com)



Peppermint Bark

Ingredients

12 ounces semisweet chocolate chips or chopped semisweet chocolate
16 ounces white chocolate chips or chopped white chocolate
1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
3/4 cup crushed candy canes

Directions

Place the semisweet chocolate chips in a medium bowl and microwave for 30 second increments until melted. Stir until smooth. Spread the chocolate into a roughly 9x13 rectangle on a piece of parchment paper. Place the chocolate in the fridge for 15 minutes to set. Place the white chocolate chips in a medium bowl and microwave for 30 second increments until melted. Add the peppermint extract and stir until smooth. Spread the white chocolate over the semisweet chocolate layer. Top with candy canes. Let harden in the fridge for about 20 minutes or until the chocolate is set. Remove from the fridge and let the bark sit at room temperature for about 10 minutes. Cut or break into pieces and serve. (dinneratthezoo.com)



Practicing Self-Care During the Holidays

1. Meditate for 10 minutes
2. Check-in with your finances
3. Focus on your own goals
4. Treat yourself
5. Maintain your physical health
6. Set healthy boundaries

FINANCIAL GYM

Family Resources

(click on each to read more)

- 24/7 [Children's Crisis and Referral Line](#), 844-HELP4WV
- [WV Kids Thrive Collaborative](#)
- [Statewide Family Advisory Board](#)
- Bureau for Behavioral Health [Office of Children, Youth, and Families](#)
- [WV Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)
- WV Department of Health and Human Resources [Local Offices](#)
- WV [Positive Behavior Support](#) (PBS) Program
- WV [Family and Community Support Program](#)
- WV [Birth to Three Program](#)
- WV [Developmental Disabilities Council](#)
- National [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)
- [WV ABLE](#)
- Family, Advocacy, Support, and Training ([FAST](#))
- [Healthy Grandfamilies](#)
- [Regional Family Coordinators](#)



Do you have ideas for the next *Family Connections* newsletter?

Please contact Josh VanBibber at joshua.e.vanbibber@wv.gov.