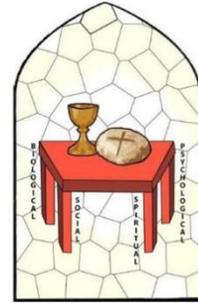




# Mental Illness Network News

*The Newsletter of the  
National Catholic Network on Mental Illness*



## **Advent 2016**

The Network is an informal community of persons concerned about the inclusion of people with mental illness in the Church. Members of the network include clergy, pastoral workers, mental health professionals along with persons with a mental illness and their families and friends. The Network is sponsored by the NCPD Council on Mental Illness.

## **Holidays**

The Holidays can be a difficult time for families that have members with mental illness. Some thought and flexibility can result in happy gatherings and good memories. For example instead of thinking of what can't happen think of how to make more possible. For example, if a family member tends to get stressed out too easily set aside a place where they can take a break and be alone for a bit. Let them know the family understands they may need a bit of peace. Someone who is not able to bring a dish to the family potluck can be included as a contributing member of the family by asking them to bring something such as a jar of pickles, asked to contribute to a dish made by someone else, or asked to bring something to decorate the table. If they smoke let them know they can go outside for a cigarette without too much judgment, just for the holidays. Take a look at the list below for some more ideas.

**Ten Tips for Coping with Holiday Stress**  
**By Mark Sichel, LCSW**

## From [www.verywell.com](http://www.verywell.com)

Here are some tools to get through the holiday season happily....as well as ways to prevent problems and misery for yourself and your loved ones:

1. **Have an attitude of gratitude.** Misery and gratitude cannot occupy the same space in our psychological house, and we have the power to choose between these emotional states.
2. **Be responsible for how you behave.** The most important part of avoiding holiday stress with our families is for each of us to feel mastery over, & satisfaction with, our own behaviors, attitudes & feelings.
3. **If you're feeling depressed and lonely, volunteer with any number of groups** that help underprivileged or hospitalized children, the homeless, or seniors and people with disabilities at the holidays.

There are many, many opportunities for doing community service. No one can be depressed when they are doing community service.

4. **Decide upon your priorities and stick to them.** Organize your time. Be reasonable with your schedule. Do not overbook yourself into a state of exhaustion—this makes people cranky, irritable, and depressed.
5. **Remember, no matter what your plans, the holidays do not automatically take away feelings of aloneness, sadness, frustration, anger, and fear.**
6. **Be careful about resentments related to holidays past.** Declare an amnesty with whichever family member or friend you are feeling past resentments. Do not feel it is helpful or intimate to tell your relative every resentment on your long laundry list of grievances. Don't let your relative do that to you, either.
7. **Don't expect the holidays to be just as they were when you were a child.** They NEVER are. YOU are not the same as when you were a child, and no one else in the family is either. On the other hand, if your memories of childhood holidays are awful, be grateful that you now have

the capacity and skills to make them wonderful for yourself and those you love.

8. **Plan unstructured, low-cost fun holiday activities:** window-shop and look at the Holiday decorations. Look at people's Christmas lighting on their homes, take a trip to the countryside, etc.—the opportunities are endless.

9. **Do not let the holidays become a reason for over-indulging** in food and drink and create unnecessary weight gain and hangovers for yourself. This will exacerbate your depression and anxiety. Contrary to popular opinion, alcohol is a depressant.

10. **Give yourself a break;** create time for yourself to do the things YOU love to do.

## **REACHING OUT**

The bulletin article below is the first in a series written by two members of the National Catholic Network on Mental Illness for Mental Illness awareness month. We will be re-publishing them in the next few newsletters.

### **Sample Articles for Bulletins and Newsletters**

It is recommended that the following be introduced with an article from the pastor asking the parish to be aware and involved at some level in outreach to persons with mental health challenges, and their families. After each article, a contact person within the Faith Community should be identified for people who want further information.

**Week 1 – First in a series of what our Faith Community can do to minister to those with mental health challenges, and their families.**

We all have Mental Health. Along the Mental Health Continuum are three major mental health states in which individuals can be located at various times in their lives. At the "healthy" end of the continuum are individuals experiencing Well-Being, a state of good mental and emotional health. These individuals may experience stress and discomfort resulting from occasional problems of everyday life, but they experience no impairment to daily functioning. All other individuals, for whom problems are more serious or prolonged, and for whom coping become progressively more difficult, are described as having "mental health problems." People experiencing Emotional Problems have mild to moderate distress, and mild to temporary impairment in functioning (insomnia, lack of concentration, or loss of appetite). This may include people with situational depression, general anxiety, or mild attention deficit disorder (ADD). People having emotional problems that rise to the level of Mental Illness experience marked distress, and moderate to disabling or chronic impairment. It may include relatively common disorders such as depression and anxiety as well as major disorders such as schizophrenia. The distinguishing factor in Mental Illness is typically chronic or long-term impairments that range from moderate to disabling in nature. As a faith community, we can offer spiritual comfort through our prayerful presence in people's lives by acknowledging their pain and supporting them through the healing and recovery process. For more information, visit the National Catholic Partnership on Disability at <http://www.ncpd.org/ministries-programs/specific/mentalillness>.

## **Questions, Questions, Questions**

What are your questions about including persons with mental illness and their families into the lives of your parish or diocese? We hope to pose these questions to the Network and find out what others are doing and thinking. Send an email to [minetwork@ncpd.org](mailto:minetwork@ncpd.org) with "question" in the subject. Each newsletter will publish the responses and ask a new question. So let us know what you want to hear about.

## **Mission of the NCPD Council on Mental Illness**

Following Jesus who embraced all, we reach out to accompany our brothers and sisters with mental illness and their families while assisting the Catholic community by providing resources and education for spiritual and pastoral support.

Contact the National Catholic Council on Mental Illness at  
minetwork@ncpd.org

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**Distributed by:**

National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD)

[www.ncpd.org](http://www.ncpd.org)