20 December 2016

‘Tis the season to be mindful of your mental health

‘Tis the season to be jolly, but for some, the festive season can be anything but joyous. The holiday period can also be a time of increases stress, overwhelming pressure, disappointment or loneliness. Those experiencing mental illness can often find this time of year harder to manage.

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) Alcohol and Other Drugs Team Clinical Director Dr Donald Spencer warns some locals may be susceptible to triggers for depression and anxiety during the holiday period.

“The Christmas and New Year period can cause significant financial pressures, which can add pressure to family and relationship issues,” Dr Spencer said.

“Many people build up to this time of year with great hopes, only to feel disappointed if their hopes aren’t fulfilled. This can also be a very stressful with the pressures of buying gifts, preparing food and catering for family, friends or visitors.”

“It’s important to note that stress linked to the festive season should not be confused with depression. If the stress continues however, in some instances it can lead to depression,” Dr Spencer said.

Being alone or away from family during the festive season can while everyone else appears to be with their family may increase feelings of isolation. Residents are encouraged to take care of themselves, as well as friends and family this holiday season.

“It’s important to think realistically about the holidays. If you’re facing the holiday period without your family and you know you’ll find it difficult, plan ahead to make sure you’ll be spending time with people whose company you enjoy,” Dr Spencer said.

Sunshine Coast locals are encouraged to take care of themselves, as well as friends and family this holiday season, by following these tips.

Tips on how to help someone with depression:

- spend time talking about the person's experiences with them
- indicate you’ve noticed a change in the person's behaviour
- let the person know you're there to listen without being judgmental
- suggest the person talks to a doctor or mental health professional
- help the person to make an appointment and/or go with the person to see a doctor or mental health professional
- ask the person how the appointment went
- talk openly about depression and help the person to find information
encourage the person to exercise, eat well and become involved in social activities
keep in touch and encourage close friends and family to do the same.

Looking after yourself:

• Don’t be afraid to ask for or accept help
• Spend time with supportive and caring people
• Keep track of your Christmas spending
• Be realistic about what you can and cannot do
• Remember to keep active; exercise is great for your wellbeing.
• Get plenty of sleep
• When drinking alcohol, do so in moderation

ENDS

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