Behavioral Health News

A newsletter relating activities of the Kings County Behavioral Health Agency .

Abraham Valencia, Editor

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Farewell 2012!!!

Stress, Depression and the Holidays: Tips for Coping

Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your health. Being realistic, planning ahead and seeking support can help ward off stress and depression.

The holiday season often brings unwelcomed guests — stress and depression. And it's no wonder. The holidays present a dizzying array of demands — parties, shopping, baking, cleaning and entertaining, to name just a few. But with some practical tips, you can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would.

Tips to prevent holiday stress and depression

When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.

1. **Acknowledge your feelings.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

2. **Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.

3. **Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children can't come to your house, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos.

4. **Set aside differences.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.

5. **Stick to a budget.** Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Try these alternatives: Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Stress, Depression and Holidays
- Cultural Competence
- Crisis Lines
- Festival of HOPE

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Be a Mental Health First Aider!

DATE: January 17-18, 2013
TIME: 9am-4:30pm
LOCATION: Behavioral Health Conference Room B
COST: $20.00
For more information contact
Christine Prewitt (559) 852-2372
Christine.Prewitt@co.kings.ca.us

KINGS COUNTY behavioral health

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5. **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for party prep and cleanup.

6. **Learn to say no.** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.

7. **Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks. Continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.

8. **Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Take a walk at night and stargaze. Listen to soothing music. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

9. **Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Take control of the holidays

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers, such as financial pressures or personal demands, so you can combat them before they lead to a meltdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.

New Years Resolution: Laugh By Debra Moreno

As we enter the New Year, many of us take this opportunity to make resolutions in an effort to improve our lives, often with the goal of becoming healthier people. We commit ourselves to making smarter food choices and exercising regularly. Making good health a priority is important for a variety of reasons, including the fact that our overall health impacts the way we handle life's ups and downs. And while some of us find success with our resolutions, many of us do not. This year, I have decided to go for the gold, set the bar high and laugh my way to better health! Many scientific studies show that laughter is both a mental activity and behavioral action which improves your overall health. Here are some ways that humor and a deep belly-laugh are good for you:

- It's an aerobic exercise! Laughter increases oxygen intake, creates a workout for our diaphragm and abdomen, stimulates the heart and helps reduce muscle tension;

- Laughter increases the production of "feel good" endorphins, our natural painkiller which helps the body heal;

- Laughter creates positive thoughts and emotions, reducing the negative thoughts that bring us down;

- Laughter decreases stress and improves our immune system, which lowers our risk for illnesses.

- Having a good sense of humor makes you fun to be with! Humor can help build rapport and create friendships, which expands our support system.

There are some simple steps to help you put more laughter in your life:

- Figure out what makes you laugh and do it more often.
- Surround yourself with funny people.
- Share your sense of humor and be funny every chance you get (as long as it's not at someone else's expense!).

To top this off, it's free and there are no negative side effects! So, go ahead and laugh your way to a healthier you!

Not Just Talking About It, But Doing It!

For Behavioral Health, Cultural Competency is more than a "buzz" word or an item on a check-list. Behavioral Health and many of its partners understand that in order to provide services and to render them in a manner where people will use them, it is important that they are culturally appropriate.

In the past year and a half, Behavioral Health along with Kings View established the Kings County Cultural Competency Committee (CCC). This committee is made up of local community partners that range from employment services, senior care, substance use providers, educational sector, veteran services, consumers and health care providers. The committee developed a formal Cultural Competency Plan as required by the State, however, this is not one of those reports that's completed and put on a shelf. The CCC has continued to work to implement the plan and improve and enhance services in our community. The Plan has been updated regularly.

Some of the goals identified and implemented by the CCC included providing some trainings locally, to assist our community based providers in better serving specific populations.

Most recently, in October, Behavioral Health hosted two such trainings, one which was provided by Open House, a LGBTQ Senior Advocacy agency out of San Francisco. This provided training on working with LGBTQ seniors. LGBTQ Senior populations often have difficulty accessing services due to restrictions that come with being a senior such as isolation, as well as stigma for those who may identify as LGBTQ. The training was conducted in two sessions over two days to increase participation, and was open to local agencies (many who participated).

The Open House training was a very interactive, educational and informative training that provided participants with resources to better serve our local LGBTQ seniors. The training was offered at no cost to participants or the agency.

The other training recently offered was held on October 18th. This was all day training, and because of demand and intensity had limited space for participants. The focus of the training was "Understanding Traditional Mexican Healing". This was a goal identified in the CCC's plan, as a number of local rural Latino populations seek out traditional healers for assistance for a number of behavioral health related issues. Understanding traditional practices can assist providers in engaging those underserved communities more effectively.

The training was open to a number of community providers (Kings Commission on Aging, Family Resource Centers, Kings Community Action Organization, Kings View Counseling, Avenal Rural Health Clinic, as well as Behavioral Health). Most of the training participants were direct service staff, such as therapists, case managers, social workers, counselors, outreach workers, etc.

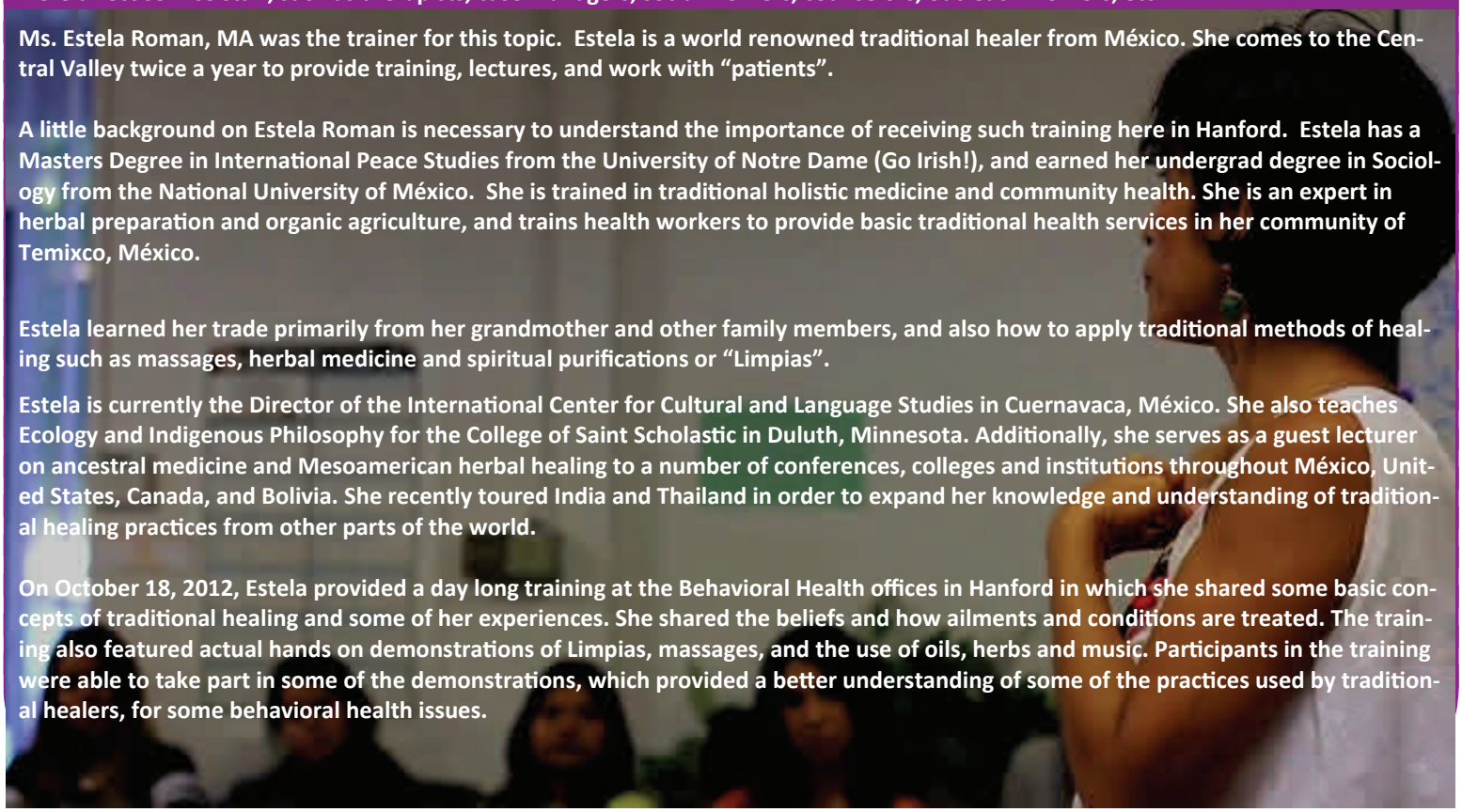
Ms. Estela Roman, MA was the trainer for this topic. Estela is a world renowned traditional healer from México. She comes to the Central Valley twice a year to provide training, lectures, and work with "patients".

A little background on Estela Roman is necessary to understand the importance of receiving such training here in Hanford. Estela has a Masters Degree in International Peace Studies from the University of Notre Dame (Go Irish!), and earned her undergrad degree in Sociology from the National University of México. She is trained in traditional holistic medicine and community health. She is an expert in herbal preparation and organic agriculture, and trains health workers to provide basic traditional health services in her community of Temixco, México.

Estela learned her trade primarily from her grandmother and other family members, and also how to apply traditional methods of healing such as massages, herbal medicine and spiritual purifications or "Limpias".

Estela is currently the Director of the International Center for Cultural and Language Studies in Cuernavaca, México. She also teaches Ecology and Indigenous Philosophy for the College of Saint Scholastic in Duluth, Minnesota. Additionally, she serves as a guest lecturer on ancestral medicine and Mesoamerican herbal healing to a number of conferences, colleges and institutions throughout México, United States, Canada, and Bolivia. She recently toured India and Thailand in order to expand her knowledge and understanding of traditional healing practices from other parts of the world.

On October 18, 2012, Estela provided a day long training at the Behavioral Health offices in Hanford in which she shared some basic concepts of traditional healing and some of her experiences. She shared the beliefs and how ailments and conditions are treated. The training also featured actual hands on demonstrations of Limpias, massages, and the use of oils, herbs and music. Participants in the training were able to take part in some of the demonstrations, which provided a better understanding of some of the practices used by traditional healers, for some behavioral health issues.



Lets Talk it Out! How You can Prevent Suicide in Rural Communities

October was National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and in an on-going effort to increase awareness of suicide and the ways we can all help prevent it, we are sharing these tips with our rural communities. If you live in a rural community, chances are you or someone you know has been touched at some point by suicide. Rates of suicide tend to be higher in rural areas (in California's small counties as well as many western states in the U.S.) than in more urban areas. Why is this the case? The answer is likely to be related to less availability of behavioral health services and increased access to highly lethal means of suicide, such as firearms.

People in rural areas do not necessarily experience more behavioral health problems than those in other areas- what is different is that the availability of mental health services or crisis services are often more limited. As many as 60 percent of rural residents live in federally-designated mental health professional shortage areas. Kings County is one of those designated shortage areas. This designation means that there are not enough mental health professionals in a particular county or community to provide a sufficient level of care. As a result, many rural residents who need mental health care either do not receive it or must rely on unspecialized care from primary care providers, faith based providers or others. Often, rural residents do not receive the help they need until symptoms are in a more severe state.

However, it is also true that rural culture offers many strengths. People may be more familiar with one another and better able to notice problem signs early. They are more likely to pitch in and help one another in a crisis. Also, many people have more than one role in such communities, making networking and getting information out easier. This is why it's important that friends, family, service providers, and other community members know the signs of suicide and are prepared to find the words to talk truthfully about suicide with someone they are concerned about.

Luckily, if you are concerned about the problem of suicide in your community, or if you are concerned about someone, there are several things you can do to help! Here are three steps to start.

Call a Crisis Line- The Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) is a free, confidential 24/7 service that will connect you to an accredited suicide prevention crisis center where you can talk to a trained counselor about your concerns. In California, there are currently nine crisis centers around the state that are members of the Lifeline. These life-saving services are available around the clock to all Californians, including those in our remote communities. Share this number with the person you are concerned about and urge them to call. You can also discuss your concerns about a friend or family member with the Lifeline counselors.

Provide Support for the Bereaved- The tragedy of a suicide death in a small community can be devastating. People who have lost someone to suicide often have trouble reaching out, and often those around them are unsure how to help or what to say. Grief after a loss by suicide can be complicated by feelings of shame, self-blame and mixed feelings of loss and anger toward the person who died. People who've recently lost someone through suicide are at an increased risk for thinking about, planning or attempting suicide themselves. The most important things you can do is to be there for the person- and to listen, without judgment. Providing support to those bereaved by a suicide death (often known as "survivors") from others who have been through this pain can be enormously helpful. Kings County Behavioral Health does provide a no cost Grief and Loss group (in both English and Spanish). Please call (559) 852-2415 for more information. Or consider starting a survivors group in your community. Visit the Sacramento –based Friends for Survival's website (www.friendsforsurvival.org) for more information about starting a group.

Reduce Access to Lethal Means- In California, firearm-related suicides account for nearly half of all suicide deaths that occurred in 2009. One reason for the high rate of firearm suicides is the lethality of this means. Having a firearm in the home is associated with an increased risk of suicide. Many rural households own at least one firearm, making them very accessible to people who may be in crisis. Strategies, such as removing firearms from the home for safekeeping, applying a gun lock and locking ammunition separately from the firearm, can all put potentially life-saving minutes between an impulse for self-harm and the means to do so. Equally as important is safe storage of medications and limiting the amount of medications kept in the home at any given time can reduce the risk of suicide by overdose.

Many rural communities in California are working hard to prevent suicide in their communities, more than ever before. Behavioral Health will continue to identify and make trainings available to our communities on the topic of suicide prevention.

Find out more by visiting www.SuicideisPreventable.org and www.yourvoicecounts.org. If you want to get involved locally, visit the Tulare & Kings Counties Suicide Prevention Task Force website at www.sptf.org for information on how you can become involved.

In Kings County, you can call 2-1-1; (559) 582-4484 or 1-800-655-2553 if you or someone you know is in crisis.

The best thing we can do is learn the signs, learn the resources, and take small steps to prevent tragedy. Remember, Lets Talk It Out!

"It's Worth It" Recovery Festival 2012

This was the theme for this year's ***Recovery Festival***, an annual event that Kings County celebrated in September, National Recovery Month. Several hundred people attended the event which focused on celebrating people's recovery from addictions among other things. If you support an addiction free community and wish to encourage people to recover, then make sure you attend next year's ***Recovery Festival***, scheduled for 2013's Labor Day weekend.

This year's event was particularly special , as it moved towards a new direction with a name change. Previously known as SoberFest, **Recovery Festival** was chosen in an effort to reduce stigma and raise awareness. It was common to hear negativity expressed towards the event known as SoberFest. "That's not for me", "I've never smoked or drank in my life," "I don't need that" were frequent comments heard. With this in mind, the SoberFest committee voted to change the name to Recovery Festival, which heightens the fact that this event is a celebration of sobriety and wellness. It's safe to say that we would all like that in our community. We need to work together to make recovery the expectation.

If you were not able to join us this year, please make plans to attend next year's event. A huge turn-out at this event will send a signal that **Kings County** embraces recovery and supports those working in the field to provide much-needed recovery services. Come celebrate with us!

Festival of Hope 2012

On October 6-7, *Tulare and Kings Counties held the 3rd Annual* ***Festival of Hope at the Tulare Outlet Center****. The* ***Tulare and Kings Counties Suicide Prevention Task Force*** *was created with the purpose of saving lives in our communities by preventing suicide. The Festival of Hope event featured a variety of elements to engage and inform our community. Those who attended enjoyed a positive atmosphere filled with breath-taking chalk murals created by professional and volunteer artists. Free live concerts filled the air with exhilarating music. Diverse performances featured beautiful cultural music and dancing. Local resources were presented to provide information about services that can transform lives. Through these activities, the focus was to bring hope to those in our community and put resources into the hands of people who need them. This year's event featured a morning Walk of Hope at Del Lago Park in which a wall of remembrance was exhibited. Those who've suffered the loss of a friend, family member or loved one were asked to bring a photograph of them to place on the wall. All activities were free and everyone was encouraged to participate. For more information and to stay in the loop for next year's event, please visit* ***www.sptf.org***

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE™
1-800-273-TALK
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Tulare & Kings Counties SUICIDE PREVENTION Task Force
www.sptf.org

Pain Isn't Always Obvious
KNOW THE SIGNS
suicideispreventable.org

VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE U.S.
NISEI LIBERTY POST NO. 5869
Hanford, California 93230

Dedication For Our Veterans

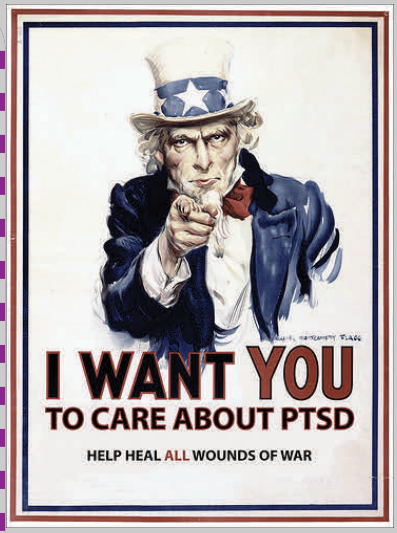
The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 5869 in Hanford, California recognized **Kings County Behavioral Health** as the Mental Health Organization of the Year. The VFW stated that such honor is not given easily. Mark Hendrickson of the VFW said *"Your agency's emphasis and dedication to the veteran has become legendary"*. Behavioral Health, according to the VFW is establishing a reputation for providing high quality services to local veterans.

The agency and its staff were recognized at the Veterans Festival in downtown Hanford on November 11, 2012. Behavioral Health's Director, Mary Anne Ford-Sherman is a Veteran herself, as are a number of the agency's staff, and an additional number of staff are spouses of servicemen and veterans.

Behavioral Health provides a number of services specifically to our local Kings County veterans. Those services include a *Veterans Support Group* (every other Wednesday evening), and a *Trauma Group* (8 week structured group) for local veterans to assist in working through issues experienced during their service. Behavioral Health also offers *Another Kind of Valor*, a training for individuals and organizations who work with veterans, providing them with skills and understanding to better work and serve our veterans. Lastly, Behavioral Health offers *Families in Transition*, a no cost support group available to families, including military families who may be experiencing difficulties during a loved ones deployment, return, etc. For more information on services offered to our veterans, please visit us on-line or give us a call: we'd be happy to assist you!

A closer look at our Veteran's Groups!

In Kings County, we have over 13,000 Veterans and the need for serving these Veterans is increasing. Out of this need, services for Veterans has evolved. The services that are currently offered consist of Individual / Couples and Group counseling. We utilize the most up-to-date, evidence based treatment approaches for various issues that Veterans present, which include: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI), Depression, Anxiety, Stress, and Anger. We also address Veterans struggles in integrating back with family and friends. The Veteran's Trauma Group is a 10 -week educational/support group that addresses the aforementioned issues as well as teaches strategies for managing various maladies of war in a safe and supportive environment. The upcoming 10 -week group will began in the latter part of January, 2013. There is no cost to attend these groups. The size of the groups are kept small to allow discussion and sharing among other fellow Veterans. After the 10-week course, Veterans are invited to continue their treatment through our bi-weekly support group. These groups are also kept small to encourage conversation and sharing of various issues. All of the services are confidential. We serve meals and soft drinks to all of our participants. If you are interested in any of these services, please call Devondria Sanchez, MFTI, or Mario Lopez, LCSW at 852-2435 or 852-2438 for further information.



Find Us

450 Kings County Dr.

Suite 104

Hanford, CA 93230

559-852-2376

www.kingscountybehavioralhealth.com