



KANE COUNTY
MENTAL HEALTH COUNCIL

making a difference ...together

Message of the Month December 2009

www.kanecountymentalhealth.org

Kane County Mental Health Council

- The Association for Individual Development 630-966-4000
- Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center 630-859-6562
- Delnor Community Hospital 630-208-3000
- Ecker Center for Mental Health Services 847-695-0484
- Family Counseling Service of Aurora 630-844-2662
- Family Service Association of Greater Elgin Area 847-695-3680
- Gateway Foundation/Aurora 630-966-7400
- Greater Elgin Family Care Center 847-608-1344
- Kane County Health Department 630-208-3801
- Larkin Center 847-695-5656
- League of Women Voters 630-365-2138
- Mental Health & Mental Retardation Services, Inc. 630-892-5456
- National Alliance on Mental Illness, DeKalb, Kane-South, Kendall Counties, Inc. 630-896-6264
- National Alliance on Mental Illness-Kane County 847-931-4715
- Provena Mercy Medical Center 630-801-2657
- Provena St. Joseph Hospital 847-931-5521
- Senior Services Association 847-741-0404
- Suicide Prevention Services 630-482-9696
- TriCity Family Services 630-232-1070
- Visiting Nurse Association of Fox Valley 630-978-9835

Looking at the total picture

Holidays are stressful, whether you are dealing with a mentally ill family member, or simply coping with life without the added pressure and stress of mental illness. It is important to have a plan, or perhaps even a back-up plan. Remember that many mental illnesses are cyclical in nature. If your family member has recently had a psychotic break, or if he or she is adjusting to new medicines, it is important that you keep things simple. Limit entertaining and concentrate on one or two quiet activities with the core family, like a special meal and trimming the tree (don't go to Aunt Dolly's where 30 relatives are gathering, many of whom may not understand the



fragility of the mentally ill family member's state of mind). It is also important to avoid functions where alcohol is freely flowing; most psychotropic medications should not be taken with alcohol. If your family member is stable, talk to him or her about their choice as far as their level of participation is concerned. Make sure you make it clear that if the "hubhub" gets to be too much, it is okay for them to go to their room. Hopefully, your guests or circle of friends will know to behave with discretion and consideration. Take a look at the total picture. For example, your mentally ill family member may absorb much of your time and attention, especially a child. Ask yourself what are you doing that is special with other family members. Perhaps an activity "outside" the home is in order with them. Last, but by no means last, if you are the principal caregiver, what you doing for YOU? Remember, fewer Christmas cookies, a long hot bath, a quiet Christmas service, listening to your favorite Christmas music, or sitting quietly and making a gratitude list, whatever centers you and helps you to breathe deeply, is going to make your holiday less stressful and more meaningful.



Info Box: Having close friends and family on whom you can count has far-reaching benefits for your health. Here's how to build and maintain these essential relationships. Tap this tool to reduce stress

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/social-support/SR00033>