

The UConn Buzz



Mind and Body Timely Tips

Wintertime and the holiday season is like a coin with two sides. At the same time that many are experiencing joy and holiday festivities, winter sports and activities, others find events stressful and the shorter days dreary. Some may experience either side of the coin depending on the day and coping skills. For others, especially those living with mental health issues, the stress and less daylight during winter make daily functioning a challenge.

Everyone can benefit from routine self-care, and assuring you meet basic wellness goals each day can go a long way towards keeping your coping skills sharp: eat nutritious foods, stay hydrated (water is a great choice), maintain a good sleep schedule, and incorporate regular physical activity into your day.

For those with conditions impacting mental health, the season can be complicated for them and their family, and bring potential for crisis. The Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services has helpful resources on their website including the following:

- ✧ Advocate for your loved one and remember they have the right to make their own choices regarding treatment and medication. Your role can include helping them get access to services; attend treatment appointments with them if possible.

- ✧ Did you know that you don't need permission to share information about your affected family member with their provider? You have information that nobody else can provide about your loved one's history and what is going on at home. It is also helpful when your family member signs a release form that gives their provider permission to share information with you about their diagnosis, treatment, and appointments; ask them to do this.

- ✧ Fact sheets at www.nimh.nih.gov can help you understand a diagnosis.

- ✧ Consider developing a crisis

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Especially during the holiday season, maintaining your healthy routines will help you retain coping skills to manage stress and additional activities.

plan: Encourage your family member to make a written plan for how to handle a psychiatric crisis; including when & where you will seek outside help.

- ✧ Respect limitations concerning the holiday season; it might mean less visiting or shorter stays to minimize stress.

- ✧ Express hope to your family member about the future. Mental illness and/or substance use may change a person's life path, and there will likely be some grief issues for both the person with the illness and for family. However, people

with mental illness and substance abuse disorders can and do go on to have successful and meaningful lives that include career & family.

- ✧ It is important to be honest with children and not ask them to "keep the secret" about a mental illness and/or substance use disorder in the family. Doing so will create an atmosphere of shame and isolate the family even further. Answer their questions openly, and in a manner that respects the privacy of the affected family member.

- ✧ Make a New Year's Resolution to take care of yourself: Follow a healthy diet, get plenty of sleep and exercise, and don't neglect your own hobbies and interests. Join a support group or seek counseling if necessary. Ask your family member's provider about family support opportunities. Or visit NAMI-CT's website (www.namict.org) for information about support groups, Family-to-Family trainings, and other programs that help family members support the recovery of their loved ones.

Are you or a loved one in crisis? Call the National Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or Infoline :dial 211, 24hr/7 days a week

Resources:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/me-dia/DMHAS/Publications/PsychEdadvocatepdf>

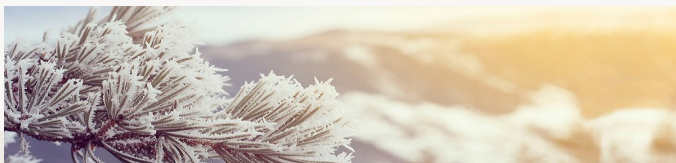
HAPPENINGS

Magic of Lights, November 19, 2021-January 2, 2022 5-10 PM. Pratt & Whitney Stadium 615 Silver Ln, East Hartford. A family-friendly drive-through holiday lights festival. Enjoy the lights and displays from the safety and comfort of your own car. Featuring a variety of festive scenes including Candyland, Toyland, Sports Row, 12 Days of Christmas, and the notorious Enchanting Tunnel of Lights.

Artists' Open Studios of Northeastern, CT, December 4-5 10am-5pm. This is a self-guided art tour featuring fine art, pottery, oils, watercolors, acrylics, woodcarving, furniture, sculpture, weaving, quilt-making, jewelry, fiber art, drawings, photography, glassworks, metal works, pyrography, and mixed media. Guests are asked to follow each venue's Covid guidelines such as wearing masks or social distancing. Maps and further information can be found at the above link.

Cupid Made Me Do It 2 Mile Urban Challenge, Saturday 12, 2022, First Baptist Church 667 Main St, Willimantic, CT This 2 mile road race starts and ends on Riverside Dr in Willimantic and runs through downtown, crossing three bridges.

Don't let the winter keep you from enjoying local farmer's markets! Find information at [2021-2022 Holiday and Winter Farmers' Markets](#)



Find tips on how to stay healthy and safe this holiday:

Strategies for a Healthy and Safe Holiday Season from the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention



Sweet Potato Minestrone

INGREDIENTS

- ◆ 1 tablespoon vegetable oil ◆ 1 large onion, chopped
- ◆ 2 large stalks celery, chopped ◆ 2 1/2 teaspoons Italian seasoning ◆ salt and pepper to taste ◆ 1 (28 ounce) can Italian-style diced tomatoes ◆ 5 cups vegetable broth ◆ 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and diced ◆ 2 large carrots, sliced thin ◆ 6 ounces green beans, cut into 1 inch pieces ◆ 5 cloves garlic, minced

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oil in a soup pot over medium-high heat. Sauté onion, celery, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper until tender, about 5 minutes.
2. Stir in tomatoes, with the juice, broth, sweet potatoes, carrots, green beans and garlic. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are tender, about 30 minutes. Enjoy!

Know Your Radon Risk

Radon is a radioactive gas that you can't smell or see. Breathing it in can damage your lungs. In fact, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. and thousands die each year. Knowing more about radon can reduce your risk.

Radon comes from the natural decay of radioactive metals in rocks and soil. Radon is both colorless & odorless. Radon gas moves up through the ground and comes into homes through cracks in floors, and foundations. It can also enter the home through well water.

Radon can give off radioactive particles. Being exposed to high levels of radioactive particles for a long time can cause lung cancer years later. Smoking increases this risk. So it is important to quit smoking. For help quitting smoking call Connecticut Quitline 1-800-Quit-NOW

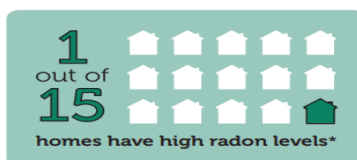
Knowing the amount of radon in your house helps you understand if you need

to do seek further information.

You can get a radon test kit through the mail, a hardware store, or you can hire a radon professional. The test measures for radioactivity in the air.

Experts recommend testing in the winter months to get the most accurate reading. Tests should be performed on the lowest accessible part of a home.

Although there is no known safe level of radon, Environmental Protection Agency suggests taking action if the level is at 4 picocuries or higher. In that case, contact a licensed professional for an evaluation. Levels between 2.0 to 4.0, may also need should also be evaluated as these levels may also pose increased risk.



Get help with your radon questions at this national hotline: 1-800-55RADON (557-2366).

Eastern Highlands Health District in collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Health is offering a **limited number of free radon testing kits** to our residents.

To obtain a kit please come by EHHD's office on 4 S Eagleville Rd, Mansfield, CT or contact Cecile Serazo at serazocc@ehhd.org

Resource: [NIH](#), [CDC](#) and the [EPA](#)

Be Well is an employee wellness program provided through the Eastern Highlands Health District through funding from the CT Department of Public Health. The goal of the program is to make the healthy choice the easy choice. **Email:** be_well@ehhd.org

