

Media Release

PUTTING FAMILY MENTAL WELLNESS FIRST AS WE ENTER THE HOLIDAY SEASON IN A PANDEMIC

FIREFLY is sharing expert tips to support families through this time

We know that this has been a challenging year and it has taken a toll on the mental health of many families, children and youth. Given the ongoing pandemic, the holidays will not be the same this year for many of us.

That is why FIREFLY is sharing expert tips and recommendations from child and youth mental health professionals to help families in our community put their mental wellness first and get ready for the holidays. If you think your child may need mental health support, please reach out for help at 1-833-696-5437.

Here are seven tips to put your family's mental wellness first and get ready for the holidays.

1. **Prioritize mental health in the holidays:** Even in a typical year, the holidays can be an especially challenging time of year for many families. When you prioritize your or your child's mental wellness, you can focus on what works for your family. As a parent, consider the things that feel realistic for you to do and then offer those choices to kids/youth to pick from.
2. **Plan early:** Plan early to start having conversations with children about what the holidays may look like so that they understand things will be different this year and they know what to expect.
3. **Focus on what's in your control:** This is a good time to focus on the things that are in your control. When it comes to traditions of the holiday season, consider how you can incorporate the traditions, or at least parts of those traditions, that are most important to your family.
4. **Managing disappointment:** For a lot of us, we are going to need to accept that the holidays just won't be what they usually are. That will be disappointing for a lot of us. It's important to acknowledge that disappointment, especially for children.
5. **Supporting children through grief:** The holidays can be especially hard for families who are grieving. You might work together to come up with ideas for memorializing your loved one over the holiday. Remember that it's okay for you child/youth to feel upset as there have been a lot of different types of loss this year.
6. **Take care of you:** The holidays can be a stressful and anxious time for parents, too. Consider planning a day where the family could play a game or watch a movie together. But don't forget to have some scheduled time where kids can play games and parents can take some time out as well.
7. **Don't underestimate your family's resilience:** Resilience is about bouncing back from challenges, rather than not having any challenges at all. Look back on your year. Notice what works for your family – and remember that this will look different for each family.

Contact: Karen Ingebrigtsen, CEO
807-938-7359
kingebrigtsen@fireflynw.ca

