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# Holiday season can prove stressful for those with mental illnesses

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By Samantha Day CONNECT

MONTGOMERY, AL (WSFA) - The holiday season is supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year, but for some it brings what is known as the holiday blues.

The holidays can be a stressful time for many, especially for those struggling with a mental illness such as depression, anxiety or addiction.

"The holidays might not be happy for everyone, and we just need to be particularly sensitive to that, I believe. Someone may have experienced a death recently and this may be their first holiday season without their loved one. Certainly, money is a stresser as people are buying gifts and taking trips and things like that, so that adds to the stress level," said Commissioner of Alabama Department of Mental Health Lynn Beshear.

Stress during the holidays can come from an increase in the number of activities you have to attend, like social events and parties. Then there's traveling, being unable to be with family or friends for the holidays and trying to do all of your Christmas shopping on a tight budget.

"They are filled with events... in addition to our usual activities of running the household or doing our job, taking care of children or family. We add in holiday parties, gift buying, and activities like that and so it challenges us to manage our time and manage our energy level and manage our mental energy level," Beshear said.

To deal with the holiday blues, the ADMH said to learn how to say "no" and set realistic expectations for yourself this holiday season.

"We need to just be mindful and maybe give each other a little bit of a break, a little bit more wiggle room as we all try to deal with the stresses of the holiday season," said Beshear.

Thomson McCorkle, the Executive Director for Wings Across Alabama, has had the holiday blues before.

"I myself face mental health challenges and I wanted to be able to give back in as many ways as I could to the consumers across the state," McCorkle said.

He joined Wings Across Alabama to give back.

Wings Across Alabama is a state-wide, non-profit organization for consumers of mental health services. They also have what they like to call a "Warm Line."

"That number is answered by a certified peer specialist. It's open Wednesday through Sunday 12 p.m. to 8 p.m.," said McCorkle. "It's not a crisis line, but it is a place for a consumer or somebody facing a mental health challenge to call and speak with somebody that has a shared experience. You know they can talk about their day being good or they can talk about their day being bad, they can talk about whatever is on their mind."

If you or someone you know is suffering from anxiety, depression or addiction and needs help, visit the [ADMH website](#) for more information, or you can call the Warm Line at 844-999-4647.

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