

MHA NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL WOMEN AND GIRLS HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY SPOTLIGHT

When she was 15, Ieshia Scott found out she was born with HIV. Learning about her status wasn't easy. She struggled with depression, and she wanted to escape being labeled as "the girl with HIV" in her community. Now, more than 10 years later, Ieshia talks openly about living with HIV, HIV prevention, and what she has learned along the way about relationships and self-love.

Ieshia talks about what it's like growing up with HIV. She also shares what she thinks all girls should know about healthy relationships and HIV and AIDS.

How old are you?

I just turned 26.



Will you tell us about how you learned you were born with HIV?

I found out I was HIV-positive at 15. I was attending Camp Hope, a week-long summer camp for children 7 through 16 who are living with HIV. Only, I didn't know that when I went. I was in an administrator's office when I found out. I saw a board with the different camp weeks listed on

it. Next to my week, it read "HIV." I immediately excused myself to find my doctor, Dr. Ana Puga, who was at camp, to ask her about it. Dr. Puga is like a second mother to me. I have been her patient my entire life. The counselors called my grandma to tell her what happened, and she told them to tell me. I remember my doctor drawing on the medical bed, showing me what HIV does to my body. I was so afraid. I remember just being sad but having so much clarity. It suddenly made sense why I had to take medicine. It wasn't for sickle cell disease like I thought it was. My Camp Hope counselors, administrators, and even my campmates were so loving and reassuring. It made the discovery a little easier. I'll never forget it.

Can you talk a little bit about your experience sharing your status with others?

I never really liked telling people

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TIPS FOR SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS IN EATING DISORDER RECOVERY

The holidays can be a time of increased stress for many. For those in recovery from an eating disorder, the holidays can be a time of increased anxiety, as there is a large emphasis on food, diet-talk is prevalent, and one's sense of structure and routine is often challenged.

It's important to note that you are not alone in feeling an increased sense of anxiety surrounding the holidays. Additionally, in challenging yourself and working to maintain your recovery, you are doing something that takes incredible strength and courage.

The following are three tips for getting through the holidays and staying on track in your eating disorder recovery.

1. Create a holiday coping plan.

It might be tempting to cancel appointments leading up to the holidays, but it's important to try to meet with your therapist, dietitian, mentor, recovery coach, and any other members of your treatment team prior to the holidays. Even if you do not have a treatment team, you can still come up with a plan for how you can best cope with the holiday. I'd suggest that this plan include a list of potential triggers (i.e. people, situations, etc.), healthy coping strategies, a list of support people that you could reach out to, and some helpful coping statements that you could tell yourself in the moment.

The following are some ideas for helpful coping statements:

- I am so brave for facing these foods that I fear.
- Being scared in recovery is normal, but I don't have to let that fear control my actions.
- No food is "good" or "bad," and all foods can fit into a healthy diet.
- I am strong and I know I can do this.
- Being more flexible with food allows me to have a full life.

2. Set healthy boundaries.

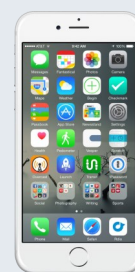
Prepare in advance how you can set healthy boundaries with friends or family members if diet or weight-related talk comes up at the table. It can be helpful to think of a few statements or strategies that you could say when this kind of discussion inevitably comes up.

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App(s) of the Month: Migraine Buddy

Migraine Buddy is an advanced migraine headache diary and tracking app designed by neurologists and data scientists. More than a migraine journal, Migraine Buddy helps users record and identify migraine triggers, migraine symptoms, migraine medications, migraine frequency and duration, pain intensity and location, medication, and other lifestyle factors so users can improve their migraine condition. Migraine Buddy provides an easy to read summary report for users to take appropriate action.



iPhone: <http://bit.ly/2ztqDH2MIGRAINE>

Android: <http://bit.ly/2zlauyvMIGRAINE>

TIPS FOR SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS IN EATING DISORDER RECOVERY

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The following are some ideas for how you can respond if someone brings up diet-talk around the holidays:

- No food is “good” or “bad”; all foods fit into a healthy diet.
- The only reason to feel guilty for eating that brownie, is if you stole it from the store.
- I’m declaring this table a diet-talk free zone.
- I hear that you’re really into your new diet, but can we talk about something more meaningful?
- So how is your new job?
- I’m just really thankful to have food to eat and to be able to spend time with family today.

RISK FACTORS FOR SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

[HTTPS://WWW.NIMH.NIH.GOV/HEALTH/TOPICS/SEASONAL-AFFECTIVE-DISORDER/INDEX.SHTML](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/seasonal-affective-disorder/index.shtml)

BEING FEMALE

SAD is diagnosed four times more often in women than in men

LIVING FAR FROM THE EQUATOR

SAD is more frequent in people who live far north or far south of the equator

FAMILY HISTORY

People with a family history of other types of depression are more likely to develop SAD

DEPRESSION OR BIPOLAR DISORDER

The symptoms of depression may worsen with the seasons if you have one of these conditions

YOUNGER AGE

Younger adults have a higher risk of SAD than older adults. SAD has been reported even in children and teens

TREATMENT: LIGHT THERAPY

Replaces the diminished sunshine of the fall and winter months using daily exposure to bright artificial light

Frankly, diet and weight-related talk is harmful and uninteresting. It is perfectly within your right to excuse yourself for a moment or to change the subject if someone decides to bring up these topics.

3. Practice self-compassion.

Beating yourself up for feeling anxious around the holidays will only serve to make you feel even worse. In stepping out of your comfort zone and facing your fears, you are doing something that is amazingly brave. True strength is not denying yourself food or avoiding certain foods-rather it is challenging yourself, despite what the eating disorder voice may be telling you. It is critical that you try to practice self-compassion and be gentle with yourself. For instance, try talking to yourself the way that you would a loved one or small child who was struggling. You can also practice self-care in the days leading up to holiday parties by doing nice and relaxing things for yourself, such as taking a bubble bath with a candle, meditating, reading and drinking tea, getting a manicure or massage, doing an at-home spa night, or playing with a pet.

You didn’t choose to have an eating disorder, but you can make the choice to continue working on your recovery. Recovery from an eating disorder is tough. You are so strong and brave for continuing to challenge yourself. True courage is not the absence of fear, rather it is feeling afraid and taking action (in alignment with your values) anyway. If you keep working on your recovery and reaching out for help and support when you are struggling, you will eventually find freedom. It may take some time, but I believe that you will find a meaningful and purpose-driven life. One where you can finally say, “I am recovered.”

By Jennifer Rollin, MSW, LCSW-C , from *Psychology Today* at: <http://bit.ly/2hhw1mjPSYCHOLOGY>



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who were not closely affected by my status. Honestly, my family and friends would share the news for me. As I've grown up, my outlook on life, on people, on love has changed. Growing up has made sharing my status with others a lot easier. When you're so free in your truths, it's like breaking all the chains. It's liberating.

How did learning your status affect you growing up?

At first, it was hard for me. At times, I suffered from severe depression and had thoughts of suicide. It was hard being "the girl with HIV" in my city. Mentally, I had to create another name and be somebody else, not "the girl with HIV." I would tell my sexual partners, but when it came to other people, I felt my business didn't concern them. Yet, where I grew up, it seems like your business belongs to everyone. No one will ever know how hard it really was for me. There are a lot of things I don't say and keep to myself. I thank God every day for freeing me and giving me the courage to be me. It truly changed me and my respect for life.

Can you talk about healthy relationships and/or the importance of safe sex?

As my motto goes when it comes to HIV, "let's keep the negative, negative, and the positive, healthy." I created that saying, and for me, it has everything to do with the importance of safe sex and healthy relationships. HIV is preventable. It's important to do couples testing. I think you have to assume people will be human. We make mistakes, and some people may choose to lie about their status. For those reasons, I think it is important that you get tested together and that you always use protection. Be aware of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases [STDs, also known as STIs]. Everything else that I've said in this interview about relationships falls under this question as well. You can't have a healthy relationship without all that other stuff. Trust me, I know.

What's your advice for others living with HIV?

Find peace within yourself and live in it. You don't have to be an advocate. You don't have to tell everyone your status. You just have to tell your sexual partners – BEFORE SEX! Live and enjoy your life, because life only stops or changes with your permission. HIV changes your routine and the way you think. It makes you wiser. The moment you realize you control your outlook on life, the better your outlook will be. You can still hang out, vacation, and enjoy stolen kisses and romantic moments. Don't allow HIV to stop you from achieving greatness and living your life.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Get tested!

Taken in part from Girlshealth.gov annual Spotlight feature, March 2016:



We are a volunteer Board of Directors that act to initiate and promote advocacy services, educational presentations, prevention programs, and information and resource referrals.

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Blue
CHRISTMAS
JOIN US FOR COMFORT & INSPIRATION THIS SEASON

LOCAL BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Two area churches will offer "Blue Christmas" services on **December 21st at 7:00pm** this year. **Freeville United Methodist Church** at 39 Main Street, Freeville and **Grace & Holy Spirit is the Lutheran Church** at 13 Court Street, Cortland, co-sponsored by the Cortland Community Church. Grief and sense of loss in a season that is supposed to be "merry" is the theme for the Grace & Holy Spirit service. Loved ones lost to cancer will be particularly recognized and cancer survivors honored through the service co-lead by the Revs. Peter Williams and Janet Adair Hansen.

SURVIVING HOLIDAY STRESS

The basic underlying themes and meanings of the holidays are human companionship, socialization, gratitude, and compassion. The holidays are supposed to be small breaks in our busy lives allowing us to stop the daily rush, and, appreciate one another. In practice, however, the consumerism now driving the holidays makes them into a very different thing: a tremendous battle against stress. Finding the perfect present for our loved ones and making the perfect dinner for our families cause tremendous anxiety and irritability. The endless onslaught of commercials letting us get a glimpse of all those things we didn't realize we wanted so badly also cause a great deal of dissatisfaction and even depression. In essence, these holiday-induced stressors create the opposite effect of the very feelings the holidays should engender. What's worse is that this stress is like adding gasoline to the fire of mental health struggles. Stress can make depressions deepen, psychoses worsen, and obsessions run wild. Stress is horrible for mental health and yet stress has become so widespread during the holidays that its presence is undeniable and seemingly unavoidable.

The good news is that stress and its deleterious effects are somewhat within our control. Although we may not realize it, stress can be minimized. By viewing the holidays for what they are, and, remembering the actual point of the holidays, setting reasonable expectations for ourselves and

others, we can help thwart this stress and improve our mental health and enjoyment of the holidays.

By Kurt Warner, MSW, Catholic Charities,
Cortland County MHA Board of Directors

Avoid Holiday Stress

With These 5 Simple and Effective
Mindfulness Techniques

The Benefits of Being Mindful this Holiday Season



Infographic Credit: FIX.com

Community Events & Support

Caregivers' Support Group

December 21; 7:00-8:00pm

Cortland Regional Medical Center Assembly Room

For more information, call the Caregivers' Resource Center at
(607) 753-5060.

Understanding Hospice

Thursday, 12/14/17 from 1:30pm-3pm

Room 302 of the County Office Building

Area Agency on Aging, 60 Central Ave., Cortland

Learn more about hospice and what services Hospicare offers our community. Call (607)753-5060 to register. Presentation is free.

Food For Thought: Introduction to Mindfulness

Wednesday, 12/13/17 from Noon-1:00pm

Cortland Career Works, 99 Main St., Cortland

60 Central Ave., Cortland

Colin Albro will present an overview of Mindfulness Meditation.

Free lunch provided. Please Preregister at:

FoodforThoughtRSVP@gmail.com

Cortland LGBT Men's Group (Monthly)

- Where: Cortland LGBT Resource Center, 73 Main St.
- Contact: (607) 756-8970

Parents & Change Support Group

Dec 11 Jan 8 Feb 12 March 12

(Monthly/2nd Monday)

- When: 6:00 to 7:30 PM
- Where: Community Center, 90 Central Avenue
- Contact: Beckey Tripp (parentsandchange@yahoo.com)

607 Healing Hearts

Monday, November 20th; 6:00 - 8:00pm

28 N. Main St., Cortland, NY

Grief support group for parents/guardians who have lost a child due to an overdose.

For more information: 607healinghearts@gmail.com

If you have an upcoming community event or article you would like considered for inclusion in the MHA Newsletter, send your submission to susan@sevenvalleyshealth.org by the 14th of the month prior, Or subscribe to the newsletter via email.

Disclaimer: The information presented here does not constitute professional medical advice. Individuals respond to treatment for mental health conditions in different ways, and treatment plans often need adjustment over time. Patients should work closely with their doctor and other health professionals in order to achieve optimal control of symptoms.