

MHA NEWSLETTER

SUMMER STRUCTURE

It's hard to believe that summer is here and another year of school is done. For many children, adolescents, and college students summer offers freedom from school and homework while providing more opportunities for summertime fun. The increase in daylight hours can have a positive effect on our moods and functioning. Socialization and exercise also increase in the warmer months, and have a further positive impact on our physical and mental health. However, summer also means less structure in one's daily life which can lead to an increase in mental health symptoms.

The unstructured schedule of summer can lead to more ADHD symptoms, anxiety, depression, seasonal affective disorder (SAD), as well as other mental illnesses that appear or worsen when the individual is bored and not partaking in regular activities. The structure provided by school like settings, can be a form of distraction. Structure often prevents children and adolescents from thinking about emotional pain they may be experiencing. With less structure and more free time thoughts become what children and adolescents are left with. Transitioning from structured school schedules to unstructured summer schedules can also create boredom which may trigger symptoms of anxiety or depression.

Continued on page 2...

A LETTER FROM THE MHA BOARD

The mission of the Mental Health Association (MHA) is to *educate* the public about mental health, to *advocate* for individuals with mental health, and to provide *support* for both individuals and families affected by mental health. These goals are lofty to say the least. They are easier said than done: especially considering the restraints of limited funding. The MHA board is, however, tirelessly meeting and seeking ways to reach these noble pursuits within the parameters of our funding. We would, now and in the future, love to have your input. We want you to improve us. We want to have a far more interactive relationship.

Please feel free to contact us and give feedback. Tell us what *you* want to see. Tell us if *you* like what we are doing. Communicate. We are very open to suggestions and our desire is to make the MHA serve you better. Our email is mha-cortlandny@gmail.com

Sincerely,
The Cortland County
Mental Health Association
Board of Directors

Also in this issue...

App of the Month	2
Summer Structure	2
Play is Essential for Your Well-Being	2
Family Matters	3
Mental Health and the Single Parent	3

MENTAL HEALTH AND THE SINGLE PARENT

Raising children brings many joys but also has its challenges. For single parents, oftentimes there are additional stressors that lead to a need for a mental health checkup. Single parents may have no other adult to assist with daily child rearing decisions which can lead to self-doubt, isolation, overreaction, and anger. A sense of loneliness may creep in when the child is in the custody of the other parent. There may be feelings of regret that perhaps the child is being short changed when it comes to the "ideal" family life. The U.S. Census (2016) also notes that children who live with a single parent, particularly their mother, often come from a family that lives in poverty.

More than one in eight women and nearly one in five children lived in poverty in 2015. More than half of all poor children lived in families headed by women. African American female headed households with children have the highest poverty rates.

The Seleni Institute (www.seleni.org) notes a number of potential ways to deal with single parenting stressors:

- Surround yourself with other parents of young kids. Observe where they fall short and learn from that, and glean inspiration by the things they do well. Remind yourself that no one is perfect, don't be afraid to cry once in a while, and take comfort when you see your child is happy and thriving.

Continued on page 3...



App(s) of the Month: Geocaching

Join the world's largest treasure hunting community with the official app for geocaching with this free app. Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor treasure hunting game using GPS-enabled devices. Participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the *geocache* (container) hidden at that location. A free, family-friendly (or solo) activity that will get you outdoors and moving this summer!

iPhone: <http://apple.co/2tcrs4o>

Android: <http://bit.ly/2s9cQTG>



SUMMER STRUCTURE

Continued ...

While most students look forward to summer, many become listless and irritable due to the lack of structured activity. As parents, it is beneficial to be aware of how the summer months impact our children's functioning as well as our own. Continuing to see a mental health counselor or doctor is important to maintaining somewhat of a routine over the summer. Additionally, it is important to schedule time to have family conversations, limit time spent with electronics, go outside, be active, get plenty of sleep and take your medications regularly.

Setting up play dates, or attending day care programs can be beneficial for children to keep their minds occupied and also help with socialization. For teens, having a part time summer job can help protect their mental health, as well as help them to afford fun activities in the summer and prevent boredom. For college students, summer can be used to continue working on educational goals, which help them to remain focused and driven. An additional strategy to combat an increase of mental health symptoms in summer, for any age group, is art journaling. Art journaling has become a tool for stress reduction and self-regulation. It has been found that personal disclosure through writing is good for emotional health and additionally boosts physical health. Art journaling is easily accessible by using any found journal or paper and art materials. While an art journal can be a place for self disclosure it is also a place to be creative and play or experiment with art materials

It is important for parents to sit down with their child early on and explore goals and opportunities that each has for the summer. Summer to-do lists and goals set the stage for expectations and experiences to look forward to. Unfortunately, creating structure and goals does not guarantee that mental health needs will not worsen or that new concerns will not develop. But it does provide the opportunity to carry a structure over the summer to support a child's well being. If symptoms appear or worsen, it is best to consult with a mental health professional as soon as you can.
*Michelle Butts, CAT-LP, Mental Health Counselor,
Family Counseling Services of Cortland County*

PLAY IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR WELL-BEING

This July, discover the power of play and adventure. For children and adults, play is a vital part of our mental well-being, physical health and personal interactions. During Park and Recreation Month in July, the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) is challenging everyone to get their play on with their local parks and recreation. Whether it's summer camp, an adult sports league, exploring a trail, Zumba class, meeting friends on the playground, playing cards in the park, or discovering nature – parks and play go hand in hand.

Why get active outside?

- To increase children's chances of success in school: Kids with access to safe parks and playgrounds are more likely to engage in physical activities – and kids who are physically active do better in school.
- To contribute to the maintenance of a healthy weight: Local parks and recreation departments increase access to nutritious food options and promote physical activity.
- To have a more positive outlook: Spending time outdoors reduces stress and improves mental health. Exposure to nature improves creativity, decreases stress hormones, and calms aggression.

Looking to just make some small changes to get moving more this summer? Try going to a local park after dinner to have the whole family play a game of tag or frisbee. Take a walk as a family and talk about what you see. Cortland County is fortunate to have a wide variety of park and recreation opportunities for all ages and abilities, many of them free or available on a sliding scale fee basis. For more information on fun ways to get active this summer, visit:

www.healthynowcortland.org/summer-challenge

or call your local recreation office. The Cortland County Youth Bureau can provide you with more specific information on local park and recreation programs and contact information by calling 607-758-5509.

*Susan Williams, Project Manager
Seven Valleys Health Coalition*



MENTAL HEALTH AND THE SINGLE PARENT

Continued ...

- When it comes to decision-making, support and Try not to worry so much about the little things. If the kids come in all wet or scribble on the couch, try to let your first reaction be a laughing sigh, or some other facial or vocal reaction that is not anger. If you can't do that, realize that your stress is negatively affecting your ability to parent as a means to distance yourself from the stressor. Taking a deep yoga breath can help.
- When you need a moment, put the kids to bed.. any time can be naptime. Better you put them to sleep than act out in anger toward them because you need a moment. Or just sit them in front of the TV and go into your bedroom for a breather.
- When it comes to decision-making, support and communicate with your children. Learn to trust the things that are going to work and to accept decision-making as an honor. There are always questions, but overall, being forced to have this responsibility nurtures confidence and independence.
- To combat feelings of loneliness when the kids aren't around, reach out to friends and schedule nights out - singing karaoke, going to dinner, or whatever - things you can't do when the kids are home. Spend that time rediscovering you!
- Realize there is no longer a cookie cutter definition of a family. Family is what you make it. It can include friends who are like family or partners. Embracing that idea is the first step to embracing the family you have.
- Exercise relieves stress! Reconnect with an activity you did when you were single. Keep a diary.
- Tell yourself that as long as you have food on the table, you're OK. Write out a budget for the month to help you see where all your money is going and needs to go.

If you still are struggling to keep your head above water, remember that most communities have a strong network of organizations that are willing to help: from emotional support for both parents and children, scholarships for various programs, food banks, mentor programs, education assistance, and mental health counseling, to name just a few. Access these programs through local churches, organizations such as the YMCA/YWCA or similar programs, schools, the Department of Social Services, online, or by calling 2-1-1. No one should have to feel that they are alone when it comes to single parenting.

Ann Hotchkin, Mobility Management Coordinator at Seven Valleys Health Coalition



Mental Health Association
OF CORTLAND COUNTY

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

President:

Patricia Schaap

Vice President:

Becky Tripp

Treasurer:

Richard Bush

Secretary:

Martha Bush

Board Members:

Michael Pisa

Kurt Warner

Sue Marks

Kathy Taylor

Sue Lewis

Amanda Joslin

Shari Weiss

To learn more about the
Cortland MHA visit:
<http://www.mhacortland.com>

or contact:
mhacortlandny@gmail.com



FAMILY MATTERS!

The Cortland MHA is proud to announce it's sponsorship of local **Family Matters** program for 2017. **Family Matters** is an interactive, family event that promotes positive family interactions with an emphasis on maintaining mental health and living healthy. The program is for youth ages 9 - 14 with their parents and includes dinner and childcare for younger siblings.

Family Matters is offered four times a year at no cost to the family. All the events include education, recreation, and a mental wellness component.

The first event of 2017 will be held at Camp Owahta on Saturday August 5th. Families will participate in fun activities that include a low ropes course, hiking, face painting and swimming; learn how to use teamwork, trust, communication, and humor to overcome obstacles, and share a meal.

For more information and to register, please contact Alma Johnson at 607-753-5155.

REGISTRATION REQUIRED
AND
SPACE IS LIMITED!



Addressee

Questions, comments, or feed-back on the MHA Newsletter?
We appreciate your thoughts!

WE'RE GOING GREEN!

Starting in September 2017 the MHA Newsletter will be produced in electronic format only. To be added to the email list, please contact susan@sevenvalleyshealth.org

Community Events & Support

Summer Meals Program

Mondays–Fridays, July & August

For more information or a list of sites visit ccocc.org/summer-lunch-program or call 607-756-5992, ex. 134

Family Matters

Saturday, August 5th

Camp Owahta, Solon, NY

For more information and to register, please contact Alma Johnson at 607-753-5155.

607 Healing Hearts

Monday, July 17th; 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

Cortland LGBT Men's Group (Monthly)

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

Parents & Change Support Group

Sep 11 Oct 9 Nov 13 Dec 11

(Monthly/2nd Monday)

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

Caregivers Support Group (Monthly)

- When: 4th Thursday at 12:30 PM
- Where: County Office Bldg (Dining Rm.)
- Contact: The Area Agency on Aging @ (607) 753-5060



If you have an upcoming community event or article you would like considered for admission to the MHA Newsletter, send your submission to susan@sevenvalleyshealth.org by the 7th of the month prior.

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.