



Words of Wellness

The Wellness Center Monthly Newsletter

Mental Health during the Holidays

by Joseph Schick, MA, MHC-LP, Counselor, The Wellness Center



Are you feeling excited about the upcoming holidays? Perhaps you are feeling a little bit stressed? Maybe you are even anxious or depressed. You might be wondering why the holiday season can stir up so many emotions. The truth is holidays can be difficult for our mental health. It is important to understand why this is the case, and how to best care for yourself during these times.

What is it about the holiday season that brings up all these emotions? There are a few possible reasons. The holidays often create pressure to feel a certain way. We see TV commercials, advertisements, and billboards of happy, smiling families, and think we need to be the same way. This can be at odds with how we actually feel. Just because it is the holiday season, it doesn't mean that our mental health concerns disappear. The contrast between what we see and what we feel can be unnerving, and this can add to any emotions we are experiencing.

Another concern is that holidays usually mean spending time with family. All individuals have a unique family and a unique relationship with their family. Family relationships can be complicated, and spending time with family can increase our stress and anxiety. This can be true for all relatives, regardless of how close we are to them. Additionally, the past year and a half has been particularly difficult for all of us due to the COVID pandemic. Many of us have lost family, friends and loved ones due to COVID and other causes. Holidays are certainly a time to gather with those we love, but for many this may bring up feelings of loss or grief.

We can understand how the holidays can cause struggles with your mental health. But it is important to remember that there are several things we can all do to make the next few weeks a little easier. First and foremost, remember that you are not

alone. According to a survey by the [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#), 66% of people feel lonely during the holiday season. Over 80% of people experience more stress than usual.

To combat these feelings of loneliness and stress during the holiday season, it is important to practice self-care. Self-care differs from person to person, but it is all about doing what is healthy for ourselves. Perhaps that means giving yourself some time alone or doing a hobby that you enjoy. Even taking a nap can help. Whatever your self-care is, make sure to set aside time for it. And finally, know that it is okay to reach out for help. In fact, it is healthy to do so. This could mean talking to a friend, family member or counselor. Asking for help is actually a sign of strength.

So, with the holidays approaching, know that it is normal to feel overwhelmed or struggle with your mental health. Also, know that there is plenty you can do to make it easier. Have a wonderful holiday season!

What's on Your Playlist?



Shanté A. Bassett, Psy.D.
Counselor, The Wellness Center

There's music to fit or fix any mood or emotion. Pleasant music can cause the release of feel-good neurotransmitters like dopamine. Even sad music can bring listeners pleasure and comfort, according to recent research. Here's a collection of some of my "Mood Music" which is also available in our Wellness Center [Spotify](#) profile.

For the reflective moments: *Naima* – John Coltrane
 For an extra push while working out: *Fight Song* – Rachel Platten
 For moments when you question your greatness: *As I Am* – H.E.R.
 For the days when getting out of bed is tough:
Get Ready – Dre Rumble
 For dancing and excitement: *Hot Music* – Soho
 For decompressing after a long day: *Viva la Vida* – Coldplay
 For fun times and unplanned dance parties:
Counting Stars – OneRepublic
 For even better times: *I Got You (I Feel Good)* – James Brown
 For nostalgia: *At Last* – Etta James
 For reminiscing: *Time* – Musiq Soulchild

I hope these songs get you through like they do for me!

LaGuardia's Neurodiversity Program

International Day of Persons with Disabilities is celebrated every December 3 to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities, with this year's theme of, "Fighting for rights in the post-Covid era". According to the [United Nations](#), about 15% of the population or 1 billion persons with disabilities in the world are among the hardest hit by Covid-19.

During this time of uncertainty, the LaGuardia Community College continues to build a more inclusive and accessible community for our students. The Wellness Center has a [Neurodiversity program](#) providing educational support, advocacy, and access services to neurodivergent students. Dr. Regina Varin-Mignano leads the program with Matthew S. Joffe, Director of Outreach & Education together with counselors and trained student support assistants specializing in working with issues pertaining to social interactions and self-esteem. The program serves students that identify with Autism Spectrum Disorders, Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD), Asperger's Syndrome and social anxiety.

In light of the COVID-19 public health crisis, the Neurodiversity program offers virtual coaching sessions during the semester to help students adjust in online learning environment. For other resources, the [Office of Accessibility](#) also provides access to programs and services to help you navigate through college.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Jane Kim, PhD



Jane Kim is a Licensed Psychologist who received her PhD from Fordham University. She earned a MA in counseling from Wake Forest University, and a BS and BA in psychology and women's and gender studies, respectively, from Northern Arizona University. Dr. Kim has over 10 years of experience working with individuals of all ages to address a range of challenges and stress related severe mental health issues, developmental/learning disabilities, trauma, immigration/acclulturation issues, and the impact of racism, poverty,

and discrimination. Dr. Kim comes to LaGuardia after working in hospital settings in both in- and outpatient clinics as well as with a Mobile Crisis Team. Dr. Kim specializes in treating complex trauma, depression, anxiety, ADHD, and crisis stabilization and management. She is committed to social justice advocacy and sees access to mental health care as an important piece of the puzzle.

Can you share 3 ways that students can take care of their mental health during the holidays? "First, taking care of your body will keep your mood up! Balance holiday sweets with healthy foods, water, and exercise. Also, keep everything in moderation, even moderation. Lastly, set healthy boundaries with family and friends. It's ok to walk away from a conversation before it becomes stressful."

Do you have a motto or professional mantra?

"Audre Lorde wrote that we are "standing on the edge of each other's battles." I think of that in my role as a therapist. As a listener, supporter, and advocate, I'm always along side clients while respecting their inner strength to heal and grow."

For the full list of the Wellness Center staff, please visit our [website](#).

For Students:

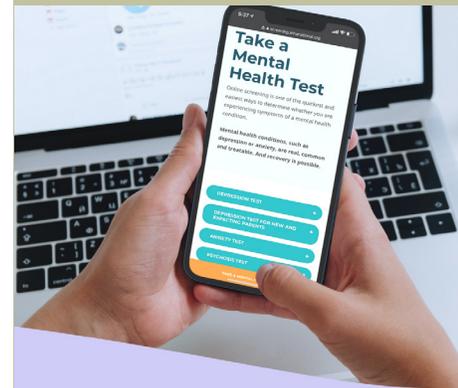
If you are new to the Wellness Center and would like to access counseling services, please complete our intake form by scanning the QR code or visiting the link: tinyurl.com/WellnessCenterIntake

For Faculty and Staff:

Please contact the Center via email and briefly describe your concern or visit our webpage at [Helping Students in Distress](#) webpage.



Intake Form



Take a free & confidential mental health screening test.

If you would like to discuss the results of your screening, please contact the Wellness Center to schedule an appointment.

Did you know...

The Wellness Center has a team of multilingual counselors that can offer counseling support in your native languages. We currently provide counseling services in the following languages: English, Hindi, Nepali, Spanish, Tibetan and Urdu.

RESOURCES



In crisis? Text "CUNY" to 741741 to text confidentially with a trained Crisis Counselor for FREE, 24/7.



If you need to speak with someone immediately, please contact NYC WELL for services at: 1-888-NYC-WELL or 1-888- 692-9355 or text 65173.



In the event of an emergency, please call 911.