

Independent Perspective #1884 with Kevin Smith

Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

Welcome to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living.

00:00:07 Speaker 1

Our guest today is Kevin Smith, Director of Mental Health Peer Connection, and I'm your host, Ernie Churchwell.

00:00:12 Speaker 1

Welcome to the program, Kevin.

00:00:14 Speaker 2

Thanks for having me, Ernie.

00:00:17 Speaker 1

It's our pleasure.

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Because of the time of year, there are particular issues that we should discuss with people with mental health concerns.

00:00:29 Speaker 1

And the obvious one is, why do the holidays tend to intensify mental health challenges even for people who normally feel pretty stable during the rest of the year?

00:00:42 Speaker 2

The holidays add a kind of pressure or emotional weight that we don't usually face.

00:00:50 Speaker 2

And even people who normally are steady sometimes feel overwhelmed.

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Our expectations skyrocket.

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Family dynamics, past grief resurface.

00:01:02 Speaker 2

It could be finances getting tighter, our routines thrown off, loneliness can feel louder, and memories of people we lost often come back.

00:01:10 Speaker 2

All of this together can make the season seem much harder to manage, even for those who typically feel grounded early.

00:01:18 Speaker 1

All right, speaking about things becoming harder to manage, what should people who are already navigating mental health issues

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look for signs that things are becoming more difficult.

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When I and my staff talk to people, we always try to encourage people to pay attention to the early signs that things are getting harder to manage.

00:01:42 Speaker 2

And that can look like pulling away from others, just feeling overwhelmed by simple things, having trouble sleeping.

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Sometimes for myself, my appetite changed, my motivation dropped, or I noticed myself

00:01:56 Speaker 2

doing things that I don't normally do.

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You can feel more irritable, emotional, hopeless, and sometimes thoughts like this, I can't do this anymore, start to creep in.

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And noticing these signs doesn't mean that something is wrong with you.

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It just means stress is building and it's time to reach out for support.

00:02:17 Speaker 1

From your vast experience working with people with mental health concerns, what are some strategies they can use

00:02:25 Speaker 1

to protect their mental health around the holidays, especially when dealing with financial stress or loneliness.

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I always encourage people to keep things simple and focus on what they can't control.

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It's okay to set boundaries and to be honest about a tight budget or sometimes give

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giving yourself time.

00:02:45 Speaker 2

A phone call or a visit means more than any gift.

00:02:51 Speaker 2

Avoid comparing yourself to others and try to keep small routines in place to stay grounded.

00:03:00 Speaker 1

All right.

00:03:00 Speaker 1

For someone who sees a breaking point coming, what does reaching out for support look like?

00:03:07 Speaker 1

And is this something where the Renewal Center can provide additional assistance?

00:03:14 Speaker 2

When someone feels like they're getting close to a breaking point, reaching out for support doesn't have to be some big dramatic event.

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It can be as simple as sending a text, just somebody just to say you're not having a great day.

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Or you can reach out to our Renewal Center that operates seven days a week from 1 p.m.

00:03:35 Speaker 2

to 9:30 p.m.

00:03:36 Speaker 2

Or you could just give them a call, 716-245-4200.

00:03:43 Speaker 1

All right.

00:03:43 Speaker 1

And it's a few months ago, they moved to a new location with a couple other organizations.

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Do you know what the new location is?

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Yes, the current location is 111 Maple Street.

00:03:57 Speaker 2

And our renewal center is fortunate enough to be a part of the Kirsten Vincent Respite and Recovery Center.

00:04:04 Speaker 2

That includes Recovery Options Made Easy, who run two different levels of respite care and Spectrum Health and Human Services, all in the same building.

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Wonderful.

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I'm sure that we're running low on time.

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How can people get more information?

00:04:24 Speaker 1

Who can they call?

00:04:26 Speaker 2

If you need more information, you can reach me, Kevin Smith, Director of Mental Health Peer Connection at 716-836-0822, extension 147.

00:04:36 Speaker 2

I'll be glad to answer any questions.

00:04:38 Speaker 1

Thanks so much for being with us, Kevin.

00:04:41 Speaker 2

Thank you.

00:04:43 Speaker 1

You've been listening to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living.

00:04:49 Speaker 1

Our guest today was Kevin Smith, Director of Mental Health Peer Connection, and I've been your host, Ernie Churchwell.