



STAR Center Teleconference Series

Topic: Multicultural Wellness, the Holidays, and You: Creating New Meaning and Ways to Celebrate (*In English*)

Date: December 16th, 2009

Time: 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time
4:00 – 5:00 p.m. Central Standard Time
3:00 – 4:00 p.m. Mountain Standard Time
2:00 – 4:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time

For many of us, the holidays can be occasions for getting together to celebrate. For others, though, the holidays can be a difficult and stressful time of encountering cultural differences, demanding or challenging family dynamics, and uncomfortable feelings that are associated with unpleasant experiences from years past.

This session will provide an opportunity to discuss and share about cultural celebrations, attitudes, and rituals that can help to lessen distress that can arise, and will invite participants to claim new meaning and adopt new ways of celebrating that tap into creative, affirming, and recovery/wellness-oriented thinking.

Speakers/Presenters:

Mertice “Gitane” Williams is the Vocational Wellness Educator at Crestwood Behavioral Health and travels across the state to support and educate consumers, staff and families throughout the Crestwood network and beyond. Gitane has over 20 years experience as a community self-help leader in California. Her expertise include housing, cultural competency, SSI and collaborating with others to build learning communities for all ages. She is currently part of the Crestwood Leadership team, where she creates and designs pre-vocational and re-entry programs.

As a Vocational Wellness Educator and community navigator of the human race, having a spiritual experience, her deepest intention includes increasing her consciousness to enable transformational systems that are inclusive of everyone personal wellness and spiritual growth. Her vision is to support and enhance client/family members in welcoming attitudinal changes to allow healing in all cultural communities. Her prayer is that we also embrace the healing of the environment, inter-generational racial trauma, and leave peace as legacy to the next generation.

John Aldam is a Licensed Practical Nurse who worked ten years as an emergency room, medical/surgical, and psych nurse. He is also a Certified Peer Specialist and Wellness Resource Consultant leading healthy lifestyle groups and workshops both within the mental health community and at private retreat centers. He has presented at Medical Grand Rounds at hospitals in Western Mass. He has facilitated workshops at local and national conferences on wellness and trauma-informed practices.

In 2005 John received the Advocacy Award from the Western Massachusetts Training Consortium, the 2005 Massachusetts State House of Representations Citation Advocacy Award, and the 2005 Outstanding Community Service Award from the US House of Representatives, presented by John Olver. In 2006 John received the NAMI Heroes in the Fight Award. He has served on the boards of the Berkshire County NAMI chapter and the Citizen Monitoring Committee, Transformation Center in Boston. John is currently an active member of the Health Initiative task force in Mass.

John does consulting work for local community mental health centers in Western Mass, as a peer educator, mentor of transitional age youth, and leader of recovery groups and a WRAP Facilitator. He is a member of the Recovery Task Force that promoted recovery services in Berkshire County, and since 2006, has volunteered as a peer supporter and recovery group leader in the inpatient units at local community hospitals, where doctors in training have been required to attend one of his groups as part of their rotation.

Learning Objectives:

- Outline some of the multicultural aspects of the holidays that can be challenging and demanding
- Explore how situations for potential conflict can be seen as opportunities for further growth and personal enjoyment
- Identify activities, thoughts, and approaches that can help minimize stress and maximize the possibility of creating new meaning

Topics for discussion:

- The reality of multicultural views, the potential conflict and misunderstanding as well as for the potential for deeper learning, meaning, and connection with others
- How to maintain your physical health as well as mental health
- Being an observer of what is happening all around you
- Realize that the stress of the Holidays may be more about the people around you trying to fulfill their holiday dreams than your role in it
- Being well is the best gift of all

Strategies:

- Maintaining structure; developing a schedule
- Exploring exercise, diet, and community involvement
- Value of volunteering and loving work
- How to witness others' stress and not become part of it
- Holiday journaling
- Recognizing the roles of those around us
- How to find and use your natural supports
- Staying centered

- Sharing your experiences finding the humor, joy, peace,
- Creating calm and finding space in all the holiday buzz
- Recognizing distress: ours and others and stepping back or out
- Wellness tools to be used now and through the year: creating a wellness tool box that can be shared with others
- Starting a step program: walking 10,000 steps a day= 5 miles
- The value of storytelling
- Creating an online warm line and telephone support network
- Seeing your gifts and sharing them, best part they don't need to be wrapped.
- Strategies around the money trap
- Cultural differences around celebration, culture conflicts can be more prevalent; exploring through the observers' lens.



Toll Free Numbers

National Crisis Helpline:

800-999-9999

**Crisis Hotline for the Physically
& Mentally Challenged**

800-426-4263

National Suicide Prevention Hotline:

800-273-TALK

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

1-800-203-1234

Calling a warm line

1-800-314-2680

Cocaine Anonymous (CA)

1-800-347-8998

Mental Health Crisis Line:

800-222-8220

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

1-800-627-3543

Grief Recovery Helpline:

800-445-4808

The STAR Center gratefully acknowledges SAMHSA as the funding source for the STAR Center's work and activities. Please visit SAMHSA/CMHS at <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs> for many helpful resources, self-help tools and guides, and links.

The views and opinions that may be presented and discussed during the teleconference will not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and should not be construed as such.
