

TSET Better Health Podcast Transcript

Episode 33: Healthy Body and Spirit Through the Holidays

November 30, 2022

Summary: We hear it every holiday season – it's the most wonderful time of the year. But it's not for those who are grieving a loss or are feeling stressed or alone during the holidays. It can also be a challenging time for our physical health, when time off and holiday gatherings can make it easy let healthy habits slide. This episode is dedicated to boosting mental, emotional and physical wellness during the holidays, so this truly can become the happiest season. Find out how from Executive Director Erin Engelke and Clinical Director Heather Gaglio of Calm Waters Center for Children and Families; Kym Hardin of Healthy Schools Oklahoma, and TSET's own Dylan Jasna, who will share new and tasty nutritional resources from Shape Your Future.

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[Theme music]

James Tyree: Hello and welcome to the TSET Better Health Podcast. This is your host James Tyree, a health communication consultant at TSET.

Dylan Jasna: And I am Dylan Jasna, a health communication manager here at TSET. Happy holidays to you, James, and to all of our listeners. Because today, we bring you glad tidings and an early gift – and episode on caring for our mental and emotional well-being during the holidays, in addition to our physical health. Because while we at TSET always encourage Oklahomans to eat better, move more and be tobacco free, it's hard to truly feel up physically when on the inside we are feeling down.

J. Tyree: That is exactly right, Dylan. While this supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year, as the song goes – and is for many – the holidays can also amplify stress, grief and even depression. Whether you – or someone you know – is feeling that way, we encourage you to hear our guests who are experts in the field of grief counseling. They will offer encouragement and some excellent advice that can uplift someone having a tough time right now.

D. Jasna: It's also important to keep good habits going for our physical health. Between holiday parties and gatherings, school and work vacations and all the great food, it can be easy to slide a little bit with staying active and eating healthy. We're going to hear from Kym Hardin of Healthy Schools Oklahoma, who will have good physical activity tips for any age. AND I'm going to share what is new for the holidays and coming up in 2023 from Shape Your Future.

J. Tyree: So ho, ho, ho everyone. We at the TSET Better Health Podcast truly wish the happiest of holidays to you and everyone. Let's begin this episode with a conversation with two

fantastic people who help people overcome grief and emotional challenges during the holidays and throughout the year.

Erin Engelke: I'm Erin Engelke. I am the executive director for Calm Waters. We are Oklahoma City's only grief center.

H. Gaglio: And I am Heather Gaglio. I am the clinical director at Calm Waters.

J. Tyree: I had a great time talking and listening to Erin and Heather about this time of year. The first question I had to ask was what are common causes or reasons for people to feel anxious and down during the holidays? Heather did a nice job of providing some insight.

H. Gaglio: We do hear that a lot, that it's the most joyous time of year, and for some that is true. For some, it's a little more complicated. A lot of people find themselves with sadness or grief or anxiety, holidays, and that could be brought on by a number of different things, [00:01:30] whether that be a loss or a change in their life or any particular challenge. And so we know that with the holiday season, there's so many traditions and you're seeing that on social media, you're seeing it on commercials, on TV shows. There's so many ways that these expectations and traditions are being messaged to us. And when we don't have that, or we maybe lost that, it can definitely [00:02:00] bring sadness and depression and a whole lot of different challenges to us because we have those reminders about maybe what we don't have or what we've lost. And that can be really challenging to deal with when it's being kind of in your face for the better of two months.

J. Tyree: So, what do you do if you're feeling that way and in that situation?

E. Engelke: [00:02:30] Yeah, this is such a good question, James. I think for a lot of people, when they feel anxious or loneliness or grief associated with a change that's happened in their lives, it's somewhat easy to isolate, to go to the opposite of what we [00:03:00] encourage people to actually do, and that is to seek help. It's okay to, number one, not be okay, but it's also okay to ask for help. There are a lot of people in our lives that want to be a support and often don't know how to be a good supporter to their loved one who is struggling. And so recognizing that it's okay to ask for support, whatever that looks like [00:03:30] to you, if that just means you need a listening ear, is that finding ways to move your body or eat of your favorite food. But sometimes it's also seeking help that's much bigger than what your friends and family can provide, and that's where Calm Waters comes in.

Here at our center, we provide free support groups for divorce and death. We also offer grief counseling [00:04:00] services, and there's no shame in that. For the majority of the families that come to us, it's almost like they've reached a breaking point, and nobody should ever have to reach a breaking point before they seek help. And so I think that that would be our number one just recommendation, is that it's okay to ask for help

from those in your life, but also it's okay to come to Calm Waters or entities like ours and seek additional services.

J. Tyree: What if it's someone we know and care about who is feeling down how. We may really want to say or do something to help, but don't really know **what** to say or do. Heather was helpful with this conundrum.

H. Gaglio: I think one thing to keep in mind is that there's [00:05:00] no way that we can, as another person, take away somebody's pain, but we can sure be a support. And so a lot of the things that we encourage people to do here at Calm Waters is to make them feel seen, heard, and valued. And we can do that by just asking, "How are you doing? I know this is a hard time for you." And listening empathically. So sitting with them, listening to what they're saying, not giving unsolicited [00:05:30] advice, but listening to truly understand where they're coming from and validate that their feelings are valid and they're allowed to feel how they're feeling and invite them to share.

One of the hardest things for people is to feel like they're being a burden. And so if you can sit with that person and truly just listen and give them space to talk and feel and share, that is one of the most helpful and supportive things that [00:06:00] a person can have. I know a lot of people want to fix it, and so one of the best things you can do actually, is to not try to fix it. Because inevitably when we are trying to fix it, it does eventually become invalidating or makes them feel like my feelings shouldn't be here, or I shouldn't feel this way, or I should be over it or I should be okay. And so simply just listening and validating and reaching out to them, knowing who they are and what they're going through.

J. Tyree: You know, many of us are feeling a bit more holiday spirit – but also a bit more stress with the added spending, planning, travel and gatherings. How can we get the upper hand on that?

E. Engelke: We often, I find as moms and dads, and just individuals, we sometimes feel compelled to do things because other people have set that expectation for us. And that's where the stress comes in, [00:08:30] because then we're pushing ourselves to do something that we really don't want to do. And so being really clear as you go into the holidays to say, "These are the things that are super important to me and my family, and that I want to make sure happen," and then set those as your priority. And if other things pop up that don't fit into those things, then don't do them.

We actually have more say and control over our lives than we think, but sometimes we allow others to interfere, so to speak, [00:09:00] with our schedules. And so that would be a big just word of advice that I would give, is just be really clear about what is important to you and your family as you enter into the holidays, because I find that a lot of the stress that we encounter is because we feel compelled to do things that we don't really want to do at all.

J. Tyree: Erin makes a great point about prioritizing and taking control of our own lives for our mental well-being. Heather, how can applying this principle with our physical well-being impact our mental and emotional health?

H. Gaglio: [00:10:00] So much of what we do with our bodies affects our emotions. And so if we're not getting enough rest, if we're eating a lot of unhealthy foods or too much or even too little, it can definitely have an effect on our mood, on our energy level. And I know that's [00:10:30] really hard because the holiday season is so much surrounded by food and that's great and it's fun and we want to embrace that. It's just making sure that we're taking care of ourselves in other ways as well, and not going off the deep end completely. So making sure we're getting enough sleep, making sure that we are taking care of ourselves, moving our bodies, getting some sunshine if we can. You never know around the holiday season. Drinking [00:11:00] enough water. Water is one of those things that we often overlook, but hydration is so important to how our brain works and that can absolutely change our moods. So 100% what we eat and how we care for our bodies definitely affects our moods and how we might get through the holiday season.

J. Tyree: The conversation with Erin Engelke and Heather Gaglio was so helpful and informative, especially for this time of year. But before closing, I asked Erin if she had any final words of advice.

E. Engelke: [00:12:00] I think above all, James, the most important thing is that everyone needs to listen to what they need first. We all know ourselves better than anyone else. We know our emotional health, our physical health, our mental health, and so being really aware of what we need and being okay with communicating that to others [00:12:30] and not feeling compelled to do or behave or become what others are saying we should be or how we should behave or telling us what we need is super important. So listen to what you need and not what others are saying you need.

(Music)

D. Jasna: Taking care of our mental and emotional well-being is very important for overall health and happiness. Another important factor is physical activity, and it's interesting that the holidays can make us *more* busy and yet *less* physically active. There are easy ways for both kids and adults to stay active, and our next guest will tell us more.

Kym Hardin: My name is Kym Hardin and I am the Physical Education and Health Coordinator for Healthy Schools Oklahoma.

D. Jasna: What is Healthy Schools Oklahoma?

K. Hardin: So Healthy Schools Oklahoma is a nonprofit that started in 1997. We work with public elementary schools across the state, promoting health and wellness. Last July, we were taken under in the community development department at the Bethany Children's Health Center. So now, we have their backing and they really believe in what we do, as

well. [00:01:00] What we provide to the schools is curriculum, resources, grants, and support to the schools within our five focus areas. Those are physical activity, nutrition, dental health awareness, injury prevention, and tobacco use awareness. Schools do apply to be in our program and we currently have 60 schools in our program across the state.

D. Jasna: While regular physical activity improves the body, she is also *mindful* of other important benefits.

K. Hardin: Being physically active doesn't just affect the health of our body, it also affects the health of our brain. There's a lot of research out there that shows that the more physically active a student is, the better their performance in school will be. And that just means a lot of different things, just being able to participate in class [00:02:00] and being able to pay attention longer, they learn better and retain that information better, the more physically active they are, and that just goes throughout your life, being able to retain information that you get.

D. Jasna: We asked Kym how to motivate kids to get up and be active if they are far more interested in screen time, whether it's a playing video games, watching lots of TV, or spending a lot of time on the phone or computer.

K. Hardin: What I find is just being an example is the best encouragement for [00:03:00] kids and teenagers. Not just being an example, but talking to them about it, how I'm personally physically active, how I feel after I do a workout or maybe I go play pickle ball with my friends or go on a walk with my neighbor, how that makes me feel. And then even just screen time, in general, has a super negative vibe around it, but really, in reality, screen time in moderation [00:03:30] is okay. Some kids love playing video games or looking things up or watching dances and stuff, and that's okay.

We want kids to find things that they like, but they also need to know our bodies are built to move and we can enjoy multiple things. So it's okay to like playing video games, but maybe you like playing pickle ball, too, or some people love to watch movies, but maybe [00:04:00] they like to join a dance class or do yoga. We're not people that like one thing. A lot of us have multiple passions. And kids and teenagers really are on a journey to find the things that they like and are passionate about. So really just encouraging them to try anything that is interesting to them because they might like it. You never know.

D. Jasna: She also shared indoor physical activity ideas for people of all ages, for those really cold days during the holidays and throughout the winter.

K. Hardin: I think the most important thing to remember when you talk about this [00:05:00] is that staying active doesn't necessarily mean high-intensity workouts. Playing a board game or a card game is something great to do indoors. You're not using a screen and your heart rate does get up sometimes when you're playing a card game. You might be

excited that you won or your heart rate gets up because you're getting nervous that the other player might see the move you're about to make.

So those are great things that you [00:05:30] can do, but playing things maybe a little more active, like hide and seek or charades, or even maybe dribbling a basketball inside and working on some tricks while inside, you can do those things. If you've got kids, kids love to be creative, using their imagination. So having a picnic inside or camping in your living room, that's really fun, or even [00:06:00] finding a workout on YouTube. Those are great and you can get physical activity in while you're doing that.

... Sometimes the [00:08:00] pickup at Walmart is great, but grocery shopping is good for you. You're walking around, you're pushing a cart, and it gets heavier as you fill it up. So that is physical activity. So that's a really good thing to do, too, but even playing hide and seek with the kids or playing charades, those are great activities that we can do as adults, too.

D. Jasna: Healthy Schools Oklahoma is into helping kids and families stay healthy, and they have partnered with Shape Your Future to expand that reach for Oklahomans.

K. Hardin: So I've mentioned YouTube a couple times. That is one way that Healthy Schools Oklahoma has worked together with Shape Your Future. We've partnered together to make several videos that you can watch and add some physical activity into your day. We've got [00:00:30] several on there, some that you could use to walk outside, we've got a nature walk activity video, and then we've got some that are literal workout videos that you could follow along and do the workout with us.

D. Jasna: Those videos, along with many other physical activity resources, can be found online at ShapeYourFutureOK.com. Kym wants to share one more piece of advice when it comes to physical activity: Have fun with it.

K. Hardin: The more fun you have being physically active, the more likely you are to do it again. So [00:01:30] participating with your kids while you're playing a board game or hide and seek, whatever it may be, going out for a walk all together, it is more likely for them to stay physically active and it affects the health of all of you.

(Music)

J. Tyree: That was good information, thank you Kym. Speaking of Shape Your Future, our esteemed producer Dylan Jasna is the TSET health communication manager for the Shape Your Future brand. And isn't it true that Shape Your Future has a ton of tips and resources of healthy eating during the holidays and throughout the year?

D. Jasna: Yes, that is true and I'm eager to tell our listeners more about it.

- J Tyree: I knew you would! Let's start with the basics. In a nutshell, what is Shape Your Future and what does it offer for Oklahomans. ~~This is so great to talk with you in this way, right? So, in a nutshell, what is Shape Your Future and what does it offer for Oklahomans?~~
- D. Jasna: Well, Shape Your Future is a local health intervention that is dedicated to helping Oklahomans make the healthy choice, the easy choice. Shape Your Future strives to educate Oklahomans on ways [00:00:30] to eat better, move more, drink water, and be tobacco free. We provide resources for parents, children, teachers, businesses, and all Oklahomans to help make the healthy choice the easy choice.
- J. Tyree: That's pretty important there because sometimes people may think that fitness or being healthy is something that's difficult to do, and so I appreciate this program's efforts to make health and wellness [00:01:00] kind of easy, something that anyone can take part in.
- D. Jasna: [00:01:00] Definitely and learning how to be healthier doesn't have to be a guessing game either. We actually have a unique tool on our website. It's the Shape Your Future health quiz, and it gives you personalized results you can easily implement into your daily routine. All you've got to do is just answer a few quick questions and Oklahomans can understand where they are when it comes to health so that they know where to make improvements. [00:01:30] You can try it now at shapeyourfutureok.com.
- J. Tyree: [00:01:30] Well don't try it now, we want you to listen to the rest of the podcast, but after this check it out, right?
- D. Jasna: Well, true.
- J. Tyree: You know Dylan, the holiday season can be a wonderful time of year, but it could also present challenges to healthy eating, right? So is Shape Your Future offering any new tips or resources that can help us enjoy holiday foods that are both tasty and healthy?
- D. Jasna: [00:02:00] Yes. So, we've got a ton of recipes online that you can incorporate into any holiday gathering. So, one that comes to mind that I really like is our pumpkin oat chocolate chip cookies. It's a great healthy treat for any holiday party. It's just one of many, like I said, on Shape Your Future that you can incorporate into either a healthier Thanksgiving or any type of holiday gathering you have. And some other great recipes we have, we've got [00:02:30] our butternut barley soup, and it's really great now, especially with it getting colder outside, and it really fills you up and it's still healthy for you, ~~so that's just a couple of dishes that we have online to... Let me try that again. Three, two.~~ Those are just a couple of dishes that we have online to help build a better, healthier holiday gathering, while not skimping out on taste [00:03:00] or fun really.

- J. Tyree: [00:03:30] That's good to know, because we really do have to [00:04:00] watch our budgets, and so many of us are really busy too. If we're short on time or money, then it's good to have these recipes and these tips there.
- D. Jasna: [00:03:30] We've got recipes really for any type of celebration or just everyday living. We've got a section on there that will show you how to go and buy healthy meals for the week and not break the bank. We've also got meals on there that will help you eat healthy while saving time, so there's really a whole list of different options for you on shapeyourfutureok.com.
- J. Tyree: But you know, we're about to enter the holiday season, ~~right man?~~ And most of us, we really do want to take care of our bodies by eating healthy and all that, but it could also be easy and fun to let ourselves go, just a little bit, right? Like at holiday [00:04:30] parties and large meals? Dylan, is there any way to strike a balance between the two of healthy eating, but also enjoying this festive time of year?
- D. Jasna: Shape Your future is all about moderation, so let's say your aunt or your grandma, they bring your favorite holiday pie. [00:06:30] It's okay to eat some, just maybe not two slices or maybe just do a half of a slice. And we have a ton of lists on healthy holiday swaps at shapeyourfutureok.com, and one of them that I've been talking about recently, and I really like this idea because it's super easy. Say you've got a holiday party coming up, try to eat a healthy snack before leaving. That way, you'll fill up on the healthy stuff and [00:07:00] be less likely to overindulge in traditional comfort foods and sugary sweets.
- J. Tyree: That's a great idea. Well, as much as I, and many of us look forward to the holidays, it will be over. We'll ring in the new year, 2023, [00:07:30] and can you share with us anything that we can look forward to from Shape Your Future in the new year?
- D. Jasna: Yeah. So we're offering Oklahomans the chance to sign up for a seven day email challenge where they get an email each day for a week that includes one simple healthy challenge for [00:08:00] the day. This will hopefully help Oklahomans stay on track with their New Years goals, or start new ones if they've fallen off track. We're also working on a variety of meal planning, healthy habit trackers, day-by-day workout plan downloads and assets to promote the start of the new year, so that's really exciting.
- We're also working on some slow cooker recipes because we know, again, trying to save money and time [00:08:30] is also on top of people's minds at the new year as well, and we're also actually starting to work on a pregnancy blog as well because we know that nutrition is so important for new mothers. So those are just a couple of things that we're working on for 2023.
- J. Tyree: That sounds very exciting. Thank you for sharing that information with us, because we all want to be healthy throughout the year, right? But especially during this holiday season. [00:09:00] And so thank you for this information on what Shape Your Future

brings, in terms of healthy eating ideas. And we also want to thank our other guests as well that we had, Kym Hardin from Healthy Schools, Oklahoma. And we also want to thank Erin and Heather from Calm Waters, who gave us some very valuable information on maintaining good mental and emotional health during this time of year.

D Jasna: Definitely. And I just had a wonderful time again on this podcast, so thank you for having me, and thank you to all of our listeners for joining us. And remember that you can always find our full podcast archive complete [00:10:00] with transcripts at tset.ok.gov/podcast. And please follow TSET on social media, @OklahomaTSET, to stay up to date. So until next time, I'm Dylan Jasna ...

J. Tyree: And James Tyree wishing you peace ...

D. Jasna: And better health.