

Make a Mental Wellness New Year's Resolution: How to Reduce Stress and Maintain Mental Health and Wellness in the Face of Economic Challenges

(Taken from: Mental Health America)

Record numbers of homes are in foreclosure, stock prices are hitting all-time lows, savings are rapidly dwindling, and the cost of living is rising. Are American families feeling the strain? The answer is yes according to the latest AP/Yahoo poll. The number of people who say they are personally happy is at 59 percent, down from 70 percent in September. A third of those polled said they're worried about losing their jobs. Half fear that they will be unable to keep up with mortgage payments and credit card bills. And 70 percent said they're anxious that the value of their stocks and retirement benefits is down.

"Protecting and strengthening our 'mental health' couldn't be more important given the stressful times we live in," said David L. Shern, Ph.D., president and CEO of Mental Health America. "Mental wellness allows one to cope and deal well with daily life and the challenges it brings -- at home, work and in life."

Celebrating its 100-Year anniversary in 2009, Mental Health America offers these simple steps to help families cope with anxiety over tough economic times.

1. **Make a New Year's Resolution:** Make it your New Year's Resolution to reduce stress and anxiety over the economy. Start by turning off the evening news and spending quality time with loved ones. Taking a step back will help you gain long-term perspective and focus on the people who matter most in your life.
2. **Focus on Your Health:** The relationship between physical health and mental health is important. Focus on finding the right balance in your diet, through exercise and getting a good night's sleep.
3. **Don't Make Rash Decisions:** Making any decision on the spur of the moment is never a good idea. Try not to react immediately to bad news.
4. **Don't Stress Over the Things You Can't Control:** Focus less on the things you can't control, like the stock market and the cost of living, and more on the things you can. Review your expenses and see where you can make cuts. Postpone that vacation or eat out a little less. Use the opportunity to find things to do with your loved ones that bring you closer and cost less, such as a family game night or handmade Christmas presents.
5. **Don't be afraid to seek help:** If the anxiety becomes too much, find someone you can talk to about what you're going through. Don't be afraid to ask for help from family members, friends, and a professional, if necessary. For a list of resources in your area, go to www.mentalhealthamerica.net.

According to Mental Health America, anxiety disorders are among the most common mental illnesses in America; more than 40 million are affected by these debilitating illnesses each year. One of the most common is Generalized Anxiety Disorder, also known as GAD, which is marked by chronic, exaggerated worry about everyday routine life events and activities. Symptoms lasting at least six months can include fatigue, trembling, muscle tension, headache, or nausea. For those experiencing GAD, help is available. For more information or referrals to local services, visit our online Frequently Asked Questions section at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/faqs, contact Mental Health America, or contact your local Mental Health America affiliate.