Happy Holidays for Some, Not All
November 2017  by Bob Swanson

The traditional holidays of Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas and New Years will soon be upon us. The general expectation is these holidays will be festive family and friend gatherings. However, for those living with mental illnesses this is not always the case. Holidays can bring increased anxiety and depression. Instead of feeling joy, those living with mental illnesses may feel dread.

This will also be a challenging time for those who are in recovery for substance abuse. Those who live with a mental illness require a unique balance of diet, exercise and sleep. As we all know, the holidays can disrupt normal routines and bring added stress.

The holidays are also a time of reflection and a feeling of loneliness for those who have lost loved ones, especially in the instances of suicide and drug overdose. Guilt and shame can be a recurring dark cloud during this time.

During the busyness of these holidays, pay special attention to those who are having difficulty. A caring word will penetrate the lonely journey that mental illness and substance abuse involves.

When we typically ask someone, “How are you doing?” have we created the condition for an honest response?

Remember that a person living with mental illness or substance abuse often hides their pain and shame by physically looking okay, and verbally saying that they are okay.

Enjoy these holidays, and realize that these are difficult times for many people.

About the Author - Bob Swanson
Bob Swanson is the past president of Swanson & Youngdale and the first Chairman of FCA International. He tragically lost his son Michael to suicide on March 13, 2009 at the age of 33. Bob now focuses his efforts on creating awareness of the impact of mental health and suicide in the construction industry.

Find more of Bob’s blogs at: www.finishingcontractors.org/preventsuicide