



# BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. Spotlight

November 2021

Your EAP is a free and confidential service, which provides assessment and short-term counseling for a variety of mental health, substance abuse and work/life related issues. To learn more about your available benefits, contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800.245.1150.



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## Coping with the Anniversary of a Traumatic Event

An *anniversary reaction* is a response brought on by the reminder on or near the time of a previous traumatic event. The reactions range from feeling uncomfortable or mildly upset to a more extreme response resulting in severe mental health or medical symptoms. It is important to note that not all survivors experience a reaction. For those that do, knowing what to expect in advance may be helpful.

**Why do people have anniversary reactions?** An anniversary date can be enough to trigger a memory. For instance, the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, are a prime example. Since the date is used when referring to the attacks, it's difficult for anyone familiar with what happened on that day to not be reminded of what occurred. Triggers can come out of nowhere around the anniversary and may happen anywhere such as home, work, school or while resting. Anniversary reactions can be triggered by a memory of the traumatic event. The memories provide information about the danger involved from the event. It serves as a reminder of when to be afraid, how to feel or look at the situation and what to think. Around the anniversary, survivors may experience panic attacks, be afraid to go certain places or realize they worry more about safety for themselves and their loved ones.

**What symptoms go along with anniversary reactions?** Anniversary reactions usually make symptoms that are common reactions to trauma or part of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) get worse:

- Reliving the event (or reexperiencing)
- Avoidance
- Negative changes in beliefs and feelings
- Feeling anxious or tense

### **What can I do to feel better?**

Within a week or more, most people will feel better. The stress symptoms will become less frequent or severe. Planning around the anniversary to occupy your time with something besides the memory such as:

- Visiting a grave
- Give to a charity
- Donate blood
- Helping others
- Spending the day with family or friends

**If you are concerned about your mental health, don't hesitate to seek advice. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides free and confidential assessment and counseling services. BHS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 800-245-1150.**



## Mental Health Support is for Everyone

It's normal for people with good mental health to suffer setbacks and need emotional support from time to time. It's human nature to have emotional ups & downs, and it's healthy to respond to the downs by talking them through with someone who can listen, sympathize and offer helpful support. Unfortunately, some consider mental health issues as signs of weakness, which is incorrect. They are signs of strength and resilience. It's estimated that one in every five adults will experience a diagnosable mental health issue. Thankfully, attitudes toward mental health are changing. Influential people in sports, entertainment, politics and other public platforms are bringing awareness and normalizing mental health challenges by being open with their own issues and how the right help can make a difference.

### What kinds of mental health support are available?

**Social Support** – reaching out to friends & family – is important in maintaining good mental health.

**Counseling** is the process of talking with a trained mental health professional to collaboratively work through a problem. In talk therapy, the counselor helps to identify goals and possible solutions, strengthen communication and coping skills and work toward improved wellbeing in mental health and relationships.

Counseling occurs in person, by phone or video chat. Counseling arrangements are commonly weekly and end when the problem has been addressed to your satisfaction. This can be after a session or after weeks, months or even years of sessions in long-term counseling.

### The three main approaches to counseling include:

- *Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)* focuses on changing negative or counterproductive thought patterns as a way to improve emotional wellbeing.
- *Psychodynamic therapy* involves the examining and resolving of inner conflicts by discovering how behaviors have developed unconsciously from life experiences.
- *Humanistic or existential therapy* emphasizes positive capabilities, creativity and personal growth rather than focusing on negative behaviors or the past.

**Medication** can be a helpful supplement to counseling for some mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and psychosis.

**If you are concerned about your mental well-being, Behavioral Health Systems is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 800-245-1150. With a robust network of providers, BHS is able to provide care tailored to your specific needs and preferences.**



## Avoid Holiday Debt

The holidays can be a stressful and financial strain even on the most experienced shoppers and bargain savers. All it takes is planning ahead to avoid the burden of overspending. Here are a few tips on holiday-spending that may work for you.

**Set a budget** Account for all the usual expenses so there are no shortages on bills or rent. Think about spending habits for the coming months and subtract likely expenses from your budget to account for gift buying.

**Decide how you're going to pay** Will you use cash or credit cards to pay for gifts? It's helpful to only bring the amount of money you plan to spend to stay within budget and know when to stop. If you do pay with a credit card, make sure to plan a budget on paying off the bill.

**Make a list (check it twice)** With the excitement of the holidays it's easy to get distracted so making a list and sticking to it can prevent unnecessary purchases.

**Track your holiday spending** Consider writing a separate list to track what you've spent similar to the list of what you bought. Regularly check to see if you are on track and sticking to your budget. Did you spend more or less than you thought on certain items? If you don't keep track of what's been spent, you could end up with a shocking surprise if it surpasses your budget.

**Get Creative** Instead of purchasing all your gifts, consider giving a meaningful gift that has a personal touch. Share homemade mixes in a mason jar such as cookie mixes or favorite recipes with photos in a custom picture book.

### BUDGET-FRIENDLY RECIPE: Pumpkin Risotto

1 onion, diced; 2 tbs olive oil; 2 tbs butter; 2 cups arborio rice; 3 cups butternut pumpkin, diced; 64 oz vegetable liquid stock; 1 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped; 1 cup parmesan cheese, grated

Heat butter and oil in a frying pan and add onion. Fry until translucent. Add in the rice and pumpkin and saute for 3-4 mins. While stirring, ladle the stock in a cup and repeat after the previous stock has been absorbed until all has been used.

Source: <https://www.kidspot.com.au/kitchen/recipes/pumpkin-risotto-recipe/8z835854>

