

## Jeff Sheen (0:04)

(Intro Music) Welcome to the Mental Health Crossroads podcast. This is your host Jeff,

## Alex Schiwal (0:12)

and this is your producer, Alex.

## Jeff Sheen (0:14)

This month, we have a brief episode for you as we work through deadlines, and our upcoming guests and your host spend time with family and friends. In this episode, we'll be talking about upcoming guests that we'll be visiting with in the New Year, new resources available from the MHDD National Training Center, and tips for mental wellness and resilience during this holiday season. (Transition Music)

## Jeff Sheen (0:36)

Early next year, we'll be talking with Dr. Ariel Schwartz and her team of young adult researchers with intellectual and developmental disabilities, what we abbreviate as IDD throughout this episode, and co-occurring mental health conditions. Ariel is an occupational therapist at the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Boston University. She's been working alongside young adults with IDD for over 15 years. Her research is focused on figuring out how to best include people with IDD in the research process, or what we call inclusive research. Ariel believes that the knowledge and experience of people with IDD should be at the forefront of research to make sure it's relevant.

## Jeff Sheen (1:12)

Young adults with IDD and mental health conditions commonly experience anxiety and depression. These mental health conditions can make it hard for them to do things that are important to them, such as go to school, live on their own and spend time with family and friends. There are many barriers to getting the services and supports that young adults with IDD and mental health conditions need to live as healthy and independently as possible. Often, there aren't enough doctors or therapists who know how to help young adults with both IDD and mental health conditions. There can be long waiting list for appointments, and it can be hard to get appointments because of challenges with transportation.

## Jeff Sheen (1:46)

Peer mentoring may be one way to make it easier for young adults with IDD and mental health conditions to get the support they need. Since there wasn't a peer mentoring program for young adults

with IDD and mental health conditions, Ariel and her team of young researchers with IDD created one. Watch for an upcoming episode to learn more about the peer mentoring program this team developed, and what the young adult researchers have to say about working with Ariel and others. (Jeff Singing)  
Music fades in and out to switch topics.

### Jeff Sheen (2:14)

If you've been following the MHDD National Training Center project on social media, or visited our website recently, you might be familiar with some of the new resources that are available. If you're new to our project, we invite you to visit our website at [MHDDcenter.org](http://MHDDcenter.org) and to follow us on social media like Facebook and Twitter. On our website, you can also sign up for a newsletter that will update you on all the new resources available each quarter. The most recent additions to our project resources include an updated and searchable resource page, our first, free online training modules that anyone can access, on depression and anxiety, with many more modules coming soon. A new fact sheet on supported decision making as an alternative to guardianship and links to our most recent webinars and podcast episodes. (Transition Music)

### Alex Schiwal (3:00)

During this busy time of year, feelings of stress and isolation can increase dramatically for many people. The holiday season can be especially challenging for individuals with mental health conditions and disabilities. The National Alliance on Mental Illness, or NAMI, for short, reported that 64% of people with mental illness report holidays make their conditions worse. A link to this article from NAMI is in the episode description.

### Alex Schiwal (3:22)

Some of the many challenges that are made more extreme this time of year include financial stress, social pressure, sensory overload, and feelings of social isolation, or a loss. There are many ways to reduce or prevent some of the increases in stress during the holiday season: managing expectations, setting healthy boundaries, making sure you have a quiet place to go, and connecting with others are some of the steps you can take. We have linked to useful resources in the episode description for more tips.

### Alex Schiwal (3:47)

As we conclude this brief episode, we want to leave you with a few action items to support your mental well-being this holiday season. First, try to practice self-compassion. By self-compassion, we mean having kindness towards yourself and accepting failures and mistakes as events, rather than being self-critical and negative. This trait, or skill, is associated with less anxiety and greater well-being. Self-compassion doesn't mean ignoring personal shortcomings or mistakes, but rather acknowledging

negative events or actions as part of being human and giving yourself space to grow. Practice being kind and accepting towards yourself this season. This mindset can contribute to your well-being.

### Alex Schiwal (4:25)

Second, reach out to your social network, or think of all the people that are supportive of you. Whether you are feeling isolated, or you just want to check in with your social network, you can benefit from being connected. Social support, or feeling supported from peers, friends, family, or a significant other is linked to resilience against depression and even suicidal ideation. And if you are feeling these things, we encourage you to reach out. Alternatively, think of how you can provide more social support and connection to the people in your life. The rewards go both ways. Finally, while research shows that there are countless benefits to receiving social support, it also shows that those that provide social support to others also benefit from reduced stress, an increased sense of belonging and meaning, and even longer lifespans. In this case it can be just as good to give support as receive it. We wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season. (Music)

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