

THE ANCHOR



BY: FLEET AND FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER MAYPORT

Welcome to Our Newsletter

Welcome to our newsletter where we share insights into our programs and exciting projects. Keep an eye out for upcoming workshops and events. We hope you have a fantastic December and we look forward to seeing you for the next issue!

-A Word from our Director-

The holidays are always a busy time. It is also the time of the year for reflecting. How was 2024 and thinking forward for the next year in 2025. Here are the highlights for the Fleet and Family Support Center 2024: We are finally fully staffed! This includes our clinical counselors and our Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce! All FORTY THREE of us making sure that we support our sailors and our military families. We also conducted multiple Return and Reunions especially those ships coming out of the Red Sea. We hosted the Tri-Base Job Fair, more than 500 people attended. We also hosted the first Transition Assistance Program Resource Fair focusing our transitioning sailors. We also hosted a CNRSE Certified Ombudsman Training. We also hosted a first ever workshop for teens focusing on financial readiness. We also hosted a first, enterprise wide, Integrated Primary Prevention Symposium. Folks, these are just the highlights. Your Fleet and Family Support Center is always ready for the small, routine events and the larger as well. It is a privilege to support our sailors and our families. I hope all have a safe holiday. Let's Go 2025! Our sailors and our families deserve the best. You can call me at 904-270-6600 ext. 1602 or e-mail me at amie.m.mckague.civ@us.navy.mil.

December Spotlight: Family Resiliency During the Holidays *Written by: Melissa Harper*

The holiday season can be filled with some of the most heartwarming, cheerful, and happy moments for families. These moments can stay with family members for a lifetime. It can also lead to melt downs, more stress, and unrealistic expectations. We wanted to share some tips to help create resiliency during this holiday season.

1. Be aware of your own stress reactions-whether that's physical reactions like difficulty sleeping or emotional reactions.
2. Adjust your expectations-we can sometimes have expectations that everything should be perfect and oftentimes that is not the reality. Kids will probably have meltdowns if you're taking family photos before lunch (sometimes even spouses.)
3. Discuss family plans with parties involved (spouse, in-laws, siblings, parents, and extended family.)
4. It is okay to set a boundary with discussing difficult topics (religious beliefs, politics, etc.) at family get togethers.
5. Try to stay on some type of schedule with kids or the very least give them a couple of days to get back on their schedule before school/daycare start back.
6. Remember your support system and healthy coping skills to use them during times of stress.

Stress is a normal part of life. Hopefully with these tips, you can decrease unneeded stress during a very stressful holiday season. Also, please keep in mind FFSC is here to help before, during, and after the holiday season!

December Spotlight: Overcoming the Holiday Blues Written by: Matthew South

The holiday season is often portrayed as a time of joy and celebration, but for many, it can bring feelings of stress, loneliness, and sadness - commonly known as the "holiday blues." Experts say these difficult emotions can stem from a variety of factors, including financial pressures, unrealistic expectations, and grief over lost loved ones.

The holiday season often brings pressure to create the perfect celebration, but it's important to set realistic expectations. The idea of a flawless holiday is often a fantasy seen in movies and advertisements, so it's essential to focus on meaningful moments, no matter how small, and allow yourself to say "no" to excessive commitments or traditions that no longer bring joy. Family gatherings, while cherished, can sometimes stir tension, so maintaining healthy boundaries is crucial. Setting clear limits and practicing assertive communication can help manage stress during these interactions. "It's vital not to neglect your own needs," says Dr. Sarah Watkins, a clinical psychologist. "Taking time for breaks, whether through journaling, meditation or simply a quiet walk, can help recharge your mental and physical health."

The holidays can also amplify feelings of isolation, so it's important to reach out for support. Whether from a friend, family member, or professional counselor, talking about your emotions can provide comfort and perspective. Acknowledging difficult emotions without judgment, and creating new holiday traditions that bring joy, are also recommended strategies. Experts stress that the holidays don't need to be perfect - the priority should be your overall wellbeing.

The holidays offer an opportunity for reflection, connection, and growth. By embracing realistic expectations, maintaining boundaries, reaching out for support, and taking care of yourself, you can navigate the holiday season with greater resilience and peace. With small adjustments, it's possible to make this time of year more manageable and even meaningful, regardless of the challenges it may bring.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT - Meet Kesha H.

What's your go-to way to unwind and recharge after a long work week?

I like to curl up with a good book.

Favorite Actor and Movie they have starred in:

Chris Evans - Captain America: The First Avenger

Favorite Food and where do you like to get it here in Jacksonville?:

I am a big fan of blackened seafood. Safe Harbor is always a great go to.

Best place you have ever visited and why?

Roatan, Honduras. The people are so welcoming, and they have some amazing food!



What is the best part about working at FFSC Mayport?

I have a passion for educating Sailors and their family members. I love being able to interact with them and assist them with resources they may need to make their military journey easier. I have met so many amazing people during my time at FFSC!

Holiday Spotlight - We asked our staff, what's your favorite Holiday tradition?

Megan

"Our family is at an exciting place since we have a 1-year-old and get to combine our past family traditions. Last year we went to the Christmas Tree Farm and plan to go annually. I am looking forward to our trip there this year!"

Waynettia

"Cooking Thanksgiving meals together is my favorite holiday tradition. Family and friends come together for a wonderful time of fun, laughter, and camaraderie. My cousins and brother and I all prank joke each other all day. The elders of the family sit back and smile at all the love and the blessings of family and their legacy."

Kesha

"On Christmas Eve, we exchange Christmas pjs and/or blankets. Then we play "Reindeer Games". Everyone comes with their own game. It can be ppt, visual, or a hands-on activity. We pair that with finger foods and just have our own party."

Jackie R.

"Christmas Eve-Dance party/potluck at my in-law's clubhouse with the family. We start out with Christmas music i.e., Michael Bubl , Mariah Carey, and the classics. Once everyone is there, we pray and then eat. Menu is typically Puerto Rican: Arroz con Gandules (rice with pigeon peas), Lechn (Roasted Pork), Potato Salad, Pl tanos maduros (Sweet Plantains), salad, dinner rolls, flan, Coquito, etc. The party begins, we play instruments, sing and dance to Latin music or Christmas music, line dance, disco, etc. There is nothing like it!"

Melissa H.

"Christmas traditions from childhood that my family does now: watching Christmas movies, playing the Lights game (counting Christmas lights on houses-whoever has the most when we get home wins for the night,) and making cinnamon rolls Christmas morning."

Jose

"We started doing gifts by a secret Santa in our family. All the adults pick a name in the hat and keep it secret. Then they put several items on a list as gift ideas with the max of \$60. Then they place the gift under the tree and open it on xmas. This way people get gifts they've chosen but don't know which and it keeps all the adults from having to spend a lot of money on gifts for everyone. Now we use the site Elfster and it's all online and you can drop the links to things you want!"

Ashley

"My favorite holiday tradition is going to Christmas Eve service then coming home to have a nice dinner and allowing the children to open one gift!"

Philline

"On Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, my family and I always go to the movies. There's always a big movie out for the holidays and we went to a movies every year."