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## Program aims to help those struggling with mental illness over holidays

By **Graeme Frisque**  
[gfrisque@metroland.com](mailto:gfrisque@metroland.com)

The Halton Regional Police Service is teaming up with the Canadian Mental Health Association Halton Region Branch in an effort to try to brighten the holidays for those suffering from mental illness.

The holidays can be a stressful time for anyone, but for people who struggle with mental health and/or addiction concerns, they can be destabilizing, lonely and overwhelming, wrote the HRPS in a release sent Dec. 21.

The Crisis Intervention and Support Team (COAST) focuses on helping those in crisis as well as people struggling with mental health and/or addiction concerns.

The service offers a 24-hour crisis line available seven days a week to provide Halton residents with support, plans for safety and healthy coping strategies.

During the holiday season, there is a

dramatic increase in the number of people who struggle to cope. They may be dealing with depression, anxiety, financial issues, family stress, isolation, social pressures, thoughts of suicide, or other concerns that affect their mental health and wellness, said police.

Don't just brush off feelings of sadness, worry, negativity, or hopelessness this time of year as simply a case of the winter blues.

The program makes available crisis intervention specialists and police officers, who specialize in mental health and crisis intervention, for Halton residents suffering from mental illness, as well as family and friends concerned about loved ones or neighbours and looking for ways to help.

Mental health problems affect people in different ways but no one has to go through it alone. COAST is always there to help.

Call 1-877-825-9011 to reach a crisis intervention specialist available 24/7.

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