

Encouraging Your Wellness

Volume 1, Issue 4

November 24, 2009

In this issue:

- Positive Parenting... Taking a Closer Look at the Holidays

- Handling Grief around the Holidays

- Dear Pam,

A question asked from a client, website visitor or class member is answered for all to see.

- Couple's Corner
Tips on keeping your relationship strong.

Positive Parenting– Taking a Closer Look at the Holidays

Do you remember Christmas as a child? Most adults I know remember Christmas as a child in an almost unrealistic way. From a child's perspective, everything was wonderful. The presents just appeared, no work or money needed. The house looked beautiful decorated with a tree, and what about the food? The tastiest creations were often delivered to our doors by friends and neighbors. The most stressful part of Christmas for children was what to include on their Christmas list, and being on Santa's "good" list. Because these were our early experiences of Christmas, we remember the magic of the season. Little did we know then that, often behind the scenes, parents were worried about money, getting the right gifts, managing time, and creating a special holiday like they remember from their own childhoods.

Enter Christmas as an adult. When I have asked what word comes to mind first when I say Christmas, most adults answer with "stress." As magical and beautiful as the season can be, it almost always brings stress. When holiday stress is added to everyday stress, it can leave parents feeling empty, drained and less than "in the spirit of the season." Here are some ways to prevent and bust stress this holiday season, so you can get back to enjoying yourself.

- Strategize holiday plans with your spouse. Discuss what makes you happy and what makes your spouse happy. Cont'd on pg. 2



Handling Grief around the Holidays

Holidays can be a very joyous time for many; but it can also be very painful for those who have lost a loved one and are experiencing the holidays without their loved one. It is especially hard when it feels like everyone around you is in the "holiday spirit" and you just want the holidays to go away. Following are some tips for coping with grief around the holidays, but don't feel like you should be "strong" enough to handle the grief on your own. Seek a support group, or participate in individual therapy for awhile for the additional support you need. Grief can be life-altering, and it is okay to need a person or professional along with you on your journey.

1. Plan ahead as to where and how you will spend your time during the holidays. Let yourself scale back on activities if you want. Redefine your holiday expectations.
2. EMDR has become such an important and effective part of my practice that I want to

Dear Readers



I hope this issue of Encouraging Your Wellness finds you happy and staying healthy as well as looking forward to the beauty of the upcoming season. And, as always, I hope you find this newsletter informative as well as inspirational in helping you be the person, parent, and partner you want to be.

I have been so blessed this year in so many ways. My practice is very full, and each day I find myself appreciating how fortunate I am to work with such courageous and interesting people. I have funny and amazing kids that challenge me and keep me real, and a husband that loves and appreciates me for all of the strong opinions and beliefs I hold. I am thankful...

A friend of mine on Facebook recently challenged her friends to a full month of things we are thankful for. When we focus on the positive things we have in our lives, our emotional focus shifts. This is actually a basic concept of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, the therapy that has been proven most effective at treating depression. So, I am paying forward this challenge—5 minutes every day of quiet, focused and appreciative time. Look hard, you may find more blessings than you knew existed. Afterall, we cannot find that which we are not looking for. Happy Reading!

“Try not to feel guilty if you are unable to meet the commercial demands of the holidays. Share of yourself, instead.”

Rethinking the Holidays... Cont'd from page 1

Prioritize your activities based on this discussion. It's okay to turn down some invitations to free up some time.

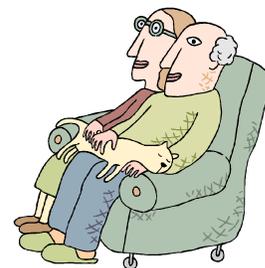
- Schedule some activities to nourish your spirit. Whether it's caroling, a musical performance or something else, plan to do activities that leave you feeling refreshed rather than frazzled and exhausted.
- Delegate! Does the house need cleaning or decorating? Let each family member be responsible for certain tasks. Encourage children to help with preparations, wrapping gifts and/or baking. You may need to lower your standards a bit, but the memories created will be worth it!
- **Resist Feeling Guilty!** The holiday season is a difficult time financially for many parents. Parents have to keep up with monthly bills and buy holiday gifts. Try not to feel guilty if you are unable to meet the commercial demands of the holidays.

Holiday grief—continued from page 1

2. Select a candle in your loved ones favorite color or scent and light it at significant times throughout the holidays, signifying the light of the love that lives on in your heart.
3. Give yourself permission to express your feelings. If you feel the need to cry, let the tears flow. They are healing. Scientists have discovered that certain brain chemicals in our tears are natural pain relievers.
4. When you are especially missing your loved one, call family or friends and share your feelings. If they knew him/her, consider asking them to share some memories of times they shared.
5. Journal your thoughts and feelings about your loved one. When we allow our emotions to come out through our pen (or keyboard), we can experience emotional relief and gain understanding of the meaning and depth of our feelings.
6. Give money that you would have spent on gifts for your absent loved one to a charity in your loved one's name, or have something dedicated to your loved one like buying a book at a library. Most studies on EMDR have focused on its treatment of trauma, however, most therapists

Couple's Corner— Fair Fighting Rules

Most couples have heated arguments, and some downright *fight!* Where we learned to solve conflict with our partners often came from how we witnessed our parents dealing with conflict. If we never saw our parents argue or resolve conflict, we may be at a complete loss for how to fight fair. I was shocked to overhear an argument of my neighbors in what was clearly a verbal “everything goes” type argument. Hurtful words and outright anger can quickly erode the positives in a relationship. But, conflict is inevitable in every relationship, so just what are we to do? When I am seeing a couple in therapy, we often discuss what each of their views are about fighting fair. In each of their views, what lines should never get crossed? How much self-control is expected when conflict erupts? When we fight with an “everything goes” mentality, the goal becomes who can win by use of shock value. Not only does this not resolve the initial conflict, it creates pain and resentment that further damage the relationship. So, how about you? Do you have fair fighting rules in your relationship? For example, is bringing up past faults or misbehaviors allowed? Is criticizing the others’ family okay? How about throwing your partners weaknesses at them? When couples are calm, it can help to determine what your fair fighting rules are by recognizing what leads you to conflict resolution, and not to increased conflict. Know that certain rules are a given—it is NEVER okay to be physically hurtful with your partner, no matter how angry/hurt you are. Calling derogatory names is emotionally abusive and should be off limits. And, for you partners who refuse to let your partner take a break from the argument, listen up. It is ALWAYS okay to take a time-out from the conflict, as long as you promise to come back to it in a reasonable time frame, when you feel calmer.



“Giving in to every want teaches kids to expect everything they want, and this is a set-up for being disappointed now and in the future?”

Rethinking the Holidays –continued from page 2

Spending beyond your means will only increase stress down the line. Instead, take advantage of free events like parades, school pageants, looking at holiday lights, etc.

- Share yourself with your kids. You may not be able to give your kids all the material things they want, but you can give of yourself. Plan a special activity for just you and your children. Go on an indoor picnic, make cookies or paper ornaments or have your own holiday concert singing special songs. The time you spend together having fun is more memorable than having tons of gifts.
- Don't give in to the “Gimmies”. I want, I want! This familiar phrase can wear parents down over the holidays. Giving in to every want teaches kids to *expect* everything they want, and this is a set up for being disappointed now or in the future.

Holiday grief Cont'd from page 2

brary.

7. Read a book or article on grief. Some suggestions: Don't Take My Grief Away From Me by Doug Manning, The Comfort Book for Those Who Mourn by Anna Trimiew, A Grief Observed by C.S.Lewis or Surviving the Loss of a Loved One by
8. Remember that the *anticipation* of the holidays without your family is often harder than the actual holidays themselves.
9. Be gentle with yourself; all wounds take time to heal. Realize you will feel sad at times.
10. Look at the holiday season as the beginning of a new journey, starting a new year. Try to enjoy the gifts of the season found in special memories and contact with family and friends.

The three tasks of grieving include 1) to understand that the person is dead 2) To feel the feelings about the person dying and 3) To go on living and loving after the person has died. Although it is natural to want to jump to task 3, to fully do so requires first tasks one and two. If you find yourself stuck, reach out!



Pamela Boaz, LCSW

700 Burbank St.
Broomfield, CO 80020

Phone: 303-906-8992
Fax: 303-469-5601
Email: pamelaboazlcsw@cs.com
Web: pamelaboaz.com

I'm on the Web! Visit me
at pamelaboaz.com

If you are in need of individual, couple or family help, call me. Together with you, I will design a treatment plan that helps you achieve your goals and gets you on the road to feeling life more fulfilled. I specialize in working with teens, adults and children who are struggling with depression, anxiety, low self-worth, past experiences of abuse, and who are believing there must be more to life than what they are currently experiencing. I look forward to speaking with you.

Dear Pam,

You have taught my daughter about deep breathing as an important coping tool, and I recently have seen an article in O Magazine, as well as hearing Dr. Oz talk about the importance of deep breathing. What is all the hype?

What other cultures have known for years and have regularly practiced is getting some well deserved attention here. Mindful breathing can reduce stress, reduce anxiety, and increase feelings of emotional well being. When we are under stress, our muscles tighten up. When we are suffering from anxiety, our heart rate increases. Practicing sets of abdominal breaths in the correct way sends a signal to your muscles to relax and reduces your heart rate. One study I read suggested that following a series of deep breaths, clients reported 50% reduced emotional distress! I think that makes it very worthwhile, and I teach it to many of my clients.

To achieve these benefits, follow these steps:

1. Take a deep breath, through your NOSE, and make sure that not only your lungs but your abdomen expand.
2. Hold for 2 seconds.
3. Blow, slowly out of your mouth. It should take you about twice as long to blow out as to breathe in.
4. For kids, they should repeat for as many years as they are old. For example, eight times for an eight year old.
5. For adults, practice this mindful breathing for several minutes when you notice your stress level being high, or are experiencing an emotion that makes you uncomfortable. You can picture blowing out the negativity if it helps. It takes awhile to get the hang of it, so keep practicing even if you don't get immediate results.

