



Are The Holidays a Blessing or A Burden?

For many of us the holidays can stir up cherished memories of times shared with loved ones or dreams of smiling strangers and a fresh start to the new year.

For others, the holidays can be a difficult reminder of loved ones who have passed or dreams not achieved. The truth is some where in between.

Your holiday experience is guided by your mind set. We become what we think. It can be easy to get stuck, to over focus on our demands, losses and challenges.

The real challenge is keeping perspective, letting go of those pressures so you can find moments to collect and calm yourself. Discovering how to make time for self care. To become more self aware and practice self compassion.

Pay attention to your thoughts and feelings. Train yourself to let go of that critical voice that passes judgment on you or a situation. Learn to cherish one smile, one moment of calm or beauty. Live in the moment, one breath at a time.

Know that demands will happen, traffic will be slow and the choice you have is how to handle it. You can smile and breathe while you're in line or you can stress and scowl.

Letting go of stress is your choice. Choose to be fully present can be your gift to your self and others .

Lakeview Beacon

Helping People Find Solutions

Winter 2014

Lakeview Counseling

1844 Oak Hollow Drive, Suite B

Phone: 231.929.0300

Traverse City, MI 49686

Advice For "Singles" On Getting Through the Holidays...

By Carol Murray, LMSW

Being newly single can be quite challenging during the holiday season. You feel bombarded with images of budding romance and happy families. You realize that the traditions you had participated in will change. Overall, your expectation is that you will be lonely, restless, and maybe even depressed. As challenging as it may seem, consider this as an opportunity to learn how to be single again.....and perhaps, even to embrace it.

Here are 11 things you can do to make the holiday season brighter.

1. Play It Forward: remind yourself that how you are feeling during this season is NOT how you will be feeling for the rest of your life. We all go through cycles and changes in life. This may be a low point for you, but there will be an upswing.
2. Do A Reality Check: don't assume that everyone else is doing better than you. You never know what an individual or family might be struggling with. And, the idea of a happy traditional family setting might be more of a marketing tool than reality.
3. Seek Wisdom: talk to people who have gone through the holidays as a single person. Ask for their advice on how to cope. You will find comfort and support in their responses.
4. Create New Traditions: find new ways to celebrate the holidays. If you always had turkey for a holiday meal, try something different. Attend a different holiday religious service. There are many creative ways to start new traditions.
5. Learn To Say "No": if you receive an invitation and you're just not ready to go out socially, or the situation might make you uncomfortable, it is okay to say "thanks for the invite. I'm going to take some time out for now". It is also okay to accept invitations, attend the event, and leave early. In other words, give yourself permission to set limits.
6. Go Public: if, on the other hand, you are someone who enjoys chatting and connecting (most women do), then accept invitations and approach each one as an opportunity to feed your need for connection. Research has found that one way to treat depression is to put yourself in a public setting in order to be around people and enhance your mood.
7. Practice Altruism: it is a proven fact that acts of kindness improve our mood. In addition, exposure to the hardship of others gives us a meaningful perspective on our own problems. The holidays are a perfect time to get out and volunteer or organize donations for those in need.
8. Reclaim An Interest: is there something you neglected or gave up entirely while you were in your previous relationship? Now if a great time to reclaim it. Set aside time and space dedicated to doing something you enjoy, especially if it is creative or offers the opportunity to meet new people.

(Continued on next page)



Count your blessings.

Researchers agree that the key to a happy life is to appreciate what you have. Dwell on the positive, and your mood quickly lifts. Spend five minutes each night during the holiday season reflecting on the good things that happened to you that day, even if they seem inconsequential. The sky at sunset, the loving look in a baby's eyes, a gift from a friend, a tasty meal, a funny incident at work. Human minds tend to skew toward the negative to alert us to predators and other threats, so you need to make a special effort to correct the bias.

Above all, remember to be mindful, no matter how busy you get. In the end you're responsible for your own happiness and peace of mind. No one else can provide it for you, even at the holidays!

Excerpt from Stephan Bodian, "5 Ways to Infuse the Holidays with Mindfulness"

www.mentalworkout.com

9. Try Something New: there's probably something you've been wanting to "try" but have held back. Use this season to "just do it". Not only are you likely to enjoy yourself, but imagine how good it will feel to have stepped outside of your comfort zone. You're likely to feel proud and confident which will add to the sense of reclaiming your life.

10. Declare A "Me Day": be a little selfish and spend a day focused on yourself, whether you stay home in PJ's watching TV reruns or movies, or go out for a nice meal, get a massage; whatever makes YOU feel good.

11. Follow the Sun: exposure to natural light is known to be a mood enhancer. If you don't have the resources to travel someplace warm and sunny, try a full-spectrum light. If you can't get natural light, use environmental cues to enhance your 5 senses: look at sunny climate images, rub suntan lotion on yourself, play uplifting music, burn a candle, eat some strawberries.

Take this list and track your use of it. Having a plan that offers choices gives you a sense of taking control of your life. Tracking your behavior and emotions gives you accurate feedback about your successful transition from "we" to "me".

For anyone who is struggling....you do not need to be alone. Reach out to a support group and/or seek counseling.

Teens and the Holiday Season by Barbara Cain, ACSW

In preparation for this article, I asked the many teens I have contact with what they like about the Holidays and what their favorite part is. You might be surprised to know that the vast majority of them like their family traditions. While they may not show enthusiasm and may have shorter fuses, your adolescent enjoys knowing what to expect and some of the "little kid" joy that comes with family events and traditions.

One of the main components of having fun is feeling like your family is "all in" for an event. However, during the adolescent years it's likely that you will experience the feeling that you are forcing time together. Many families have designated this time as "Forced Family Fun". But here's the thing....even if your teen starts out surly and standoffish, he/she generally warms up and you see the light of that lovely child you know is inside. It's worth it to push the issue of spending time together.

So, how might you beef up your traditions to better include/entice your teen to join in? Some of the ideas below might be useful in starting a conversation about how your Family can add to your traditions and build in new experiences to share with your kids as they get older.

1. Have a conversation at dinner or when everyone is together. Make a list of what each person would like to do during the holidays? Prioritize some of these things so each person feels like their opinion matters. There might be some great ideas that you haven't thought of. Or some minor adjustments that will help things be easier and more enjoyable for everyone. For example, if your teen suggests a slightly later start of Christmas morning present opening, perhaps having breakfast before presents is a way to adjust things a bit to keep everyone in a relatively good place for the day.



*No one
has ever
become
poor
from
giving ~*
**Maya
Angelou**

**For local volunteer
or donation ideas
check out these
sites:**
unitedwaynwmi.org,
gtsafeharbor.org,
fatherfred.org,
goodwillnmi.org,
cfsnwmi.org,
womensresourcecenter.org

*It's not
how much
we give
but how
much love
we put
into giving~*
**Mother
Theresa**

2. Your teen is old enough to be working more on the Giving Back part of the season. Brainstorm ideas that your teen might connect with and then help make that connection. This could be anything from taking cookies to the public service workers to wrapping presents for a local organization. There are many organized events that can help a teen develop more awareness of the community. Serve a meal. Direct traffic. Collect food. Donate books or coats or socks or mittens. There are so many options.(see side bar for local options)or call your local school or church.
3. Prioritize your time. Your kids are watching. If you work to keep the holidays joy filled and less hectic, they will follow your lead. This might mean working around your teen's schedule a bit more so they are included in the annual cookie baking or caroling or shopping. If we can work toward enjoying the events on the calendar rather than seeing them as stressful, we are teaching our kids to embrace the season. Making sure there are quiet pockets where time isn't scheduled is just as important. Maybe a family dinner and game night at home. Or a screen free night of hanging out. Or a hike in the woods. Ten minutes of yoga or deep breathing. Reading a treasured story out loud. These points of connection are what is most important. And it's the connection that your kids ultimately will remember.

In our practice we have discovered that using technology can be a real advantage not only with tech savvy teens but for anyone who can benefit from having support and guidance outside of our office. Many of our therapists are using these apps not only with clients but for their own peace of mind. We have visited these sites and apps, they can be found in iTunes or Google Play. Many are free and offer "in app" purchases but you can use the app without making any purchase.

Apps For Relaxation

Sleep Meditations for Kids (imagery) *Free on iTunes or Google Play
www.dailyburn.com/life/tech/guie-meditation-apps
CALM (relaxation with beautiful sounds and nature scenes)
SAM (quick ideas for calming down; anxiety reduction)
Brain HQ
Healthy Place (Follow on Facebook)

Breathing Apps and meditation

www.dailyburn.com/life/tech/guided-meditation-apps
Pranayama (free breathing guided meditations)
[www.insighttimer.com/\(guided-meditations](http://www.insighttimer.com/(guided-meditations)
HEADSPACE (Teaches meditation)
Darren Marks, Relax Completely Meditation, Free
GPS for the Soul
Breath 2 Relaxation
5 minute meditation

Sleep Apps

RELAX AND SLEEP WELL
Sleep Meditations for kids (imagery)

Lakeview Counseling

Please feel free to make copies of your Lakeview Beacon

231-929-0300

TO REACH US:

**PHONE:
231.929.0300**

1-855-508-0300

**FAX:
231.933.6378**

ON THE WEB!
WWW.LAKEVIEWTC.COM



Laughter is the best medicine for putting a smile on your face!

What do you call people who are afraid of Santa Claus? *Claustrophobic!*

Dear Santa, Please bring me a fat bank account and a small body.
PS. This year please don't mix them up like you did last year.

What do you call a kid who doesn't believe in Santa? *A rebel without a Claus!*

What is a parent's favorite Christmas Carol? *Silent Night*

This holiday, in lieu of gifts, *I've decided to give everyone my opinion!*

New Year's Prayer for The Elderly:
*God grant me the senility to forget the people I never really liked,
The good fortune to run into the ones I do like,
and the eyesight to tell the difference.*

It was so cold last night that....

*Starbucks was serving coffee on a stick.
All my lawyer friends had their hands in their own pockets.
Even the Good Humor man was in a bad mood.
Even politicians couldn't get into a heated argument.*

Lakeview Counseling
1844 Oak Hollow Drive, Suite B
Traverse City, MI 49686

Barbara Cain, ACSW
Laura Slaughter, ACSW

Carol Murray, ACSW (Director)
Janet Hughes, ACSW

Jill Kimball, ACSW
Darcy Britten, LPC, NCC