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What to Do about the Holiday Blues

Not everyone shares in the celebration and joy associated with the holidays. Many people feel stressed and unhappy in response to the demands of shopping for gifts, spending large amounts of money, attending parties and family gatherings, and entertaining house-guests. It is not uncommon to react to these stresses with excessive drinking and eating, difficulty sleeping, and physical complaints. The holiday blues are a common result. If you experience reactions like these during the holidays, you are not alone. Let's take a look at what causes the holiday blues and what you can do about them.



What Can Cause the Holiday Blues?

- **Fear of disappointing others.** Some people fear disappointing their loved ones during the holidays. Even though they can't afford to spend a lot of money on gifts, some people feel so obligated to come through with a fancy gift that they spend more than they can afford.
- **Bad memories.** For some families, the holidays are times of chaos and confusion. This is especially true in families where people have substance abuse problems or dysfunctional ways of relating to each other.
- **It could be SAD.** People who live in northern states may experience depression during the winter because of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). SAD results from fewer hours of sunlight as the days grow shorter during the winter months.

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Strategies for Dealing with the Holiday Blues Continued...

While the holiday blues are usually temporary, these ideas can help make this year's holiday experience more pleasant and less stressful.

- **DRINK LESS** alcohol. Even though drinking alcohol gives you a temporary feeling of well-being, it is a depressant and never makes anything better.
- Give yourself **PERMISSION** not to feel cheerful. Accept how you are feeling. If you have recently experienced a loss, you can't expect yourself to put on a happy face. Tell others how you are feeling and what you need.
- Have a **SPENDING LIMIT** and stick to it. Look for holiday activities that are free, such as driving around to look at holiday decorations. Look for ways to show people you care without spending a lot.
- **GIVE YOURSELF SPECIAL CARE.** Schedule times to relax and pamper yourself. Take a warm bath or spend an evening with a good book.
- Get some **EXERCISE.** Exercise has a positive impact on depression because it boosts serotonin levels. Try to get some type of exercise at least twice each week.

After the Holidays...

For some people, holiday blues continue into the new year. This is often caused by leftover feelings of disappointment during the holiday season and being physically exhausted. The blues also happen for some people because the start of a new year is a time of reflection, which can produce anxiety.



Is It More than Just the Holiday Blues?

Clinical depression is more than just feeling sad for a few weeks. The symptoms generally include changes in appetite and sleep patterns, having less interest in daily activities, difficulty concentrating, and a general feeling of hopelessness. Clinical depression requires professional treatment. If you are concerned that a friend or relative may be suffering from more than just holiday blues, you should express your concerns. If the person expresses thoughts of worthlessness or suicide, it is important to seek the help of a qualified psychologist/psychiatrist.



NEW ASSOCIATE

Fong Ailon Canniff is pleased to announce a new addition to our firm.

Vikki Small will be graduating with her Masters degree in Counselling Psychology and commencing in the new year will be completing her internship under the supervision of Dr. Larry Fong.

“Vikki will be accepting new clients on a sliding scale over the next internship year.”

Her thesis involved the production of assessment guidelines for mobility in child custody cases and through her practicum placements Vikki has gained considerable experience working with issues of anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and behavioural management. She has also completed The Mediation of Family and Divorce Conflicts course given by LESA, and will be accepting mediation clients as well as individuals, couples, and families with counselling-related concerns.

Vikki will be accepting new clients on a sliding scale over the next internship year.

AFCC CONVENTION IN COLORADO

This past September Eileen Ailon, Hanita Dagan and April Byers attended AFCC’s advanced training in Parenting Coordination With Prejudice, a newer intervention for high conflict parents.

For those of us working with high conflict families, this intervention offers an innovative, structured process that encourages parenting plan implementation and decision making, while facilitating disengagement from conflict. This approach is proving to be highly effective.

For more information please call our office.



WORKSHOP ON CHILD CUSTODY EVALUATION

Associates of Fong Ailon Canniff also attended Dr. Jonathan Gould’s workshop on Advances in the Scientific Child Custody Evaluation.

New research findings with respect to child developmental concerns and outcomes for children were presented.



SUGGESTIONS/COMMENTS?

Do you have any suggestions for future articles, or just a comment regarding this newsletter? We welcome your feedback. Please contact Val Schuster at 266-2017 or at vschuster@worldpsych.ca.