

BEACON OF LIGHT



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Hope Springs Eternal

By Karen Mercer, Director

Hope springs eternal- the phrase has resonated with me for weeks as we prepared to issue our first newsletter. Hope is the belief that no matter what adversity we face, nor how difficult times may be, we believe a better day will come. Hope is more than an optimistic outlook on life; it is a belief that the journey through the adversity will result in a positive outcome. The gift of strength to patiently wait for that day is evidence of Grace.

For Christians, hope is a fitting word for the seasons of Advent and Christmas. During this holiday season we prepare for a wonderful gift from God; a gift that exemplifies hope. This season calls on each of us to examine our belief that a better day, a better time awaits us.

In today's world of economic down turns, terrorism around the globe, children killing parents, parents abusing children, hope seems

Holidays Got You Down?

By Dr. Karyn Felder, Therapist

Holiday songs tell us "It's the happiest time of the year." While we like to think of this season as a time of merriment, festive parties, joyous family gatherings, and optimistic hopes for the new year, sometimes our idealized expectations are not met and we end up feeling anxious, let down, disillusioned, alienated, and/or stretched to emotional limits. Pre-holiday stress. Mid-holiday frenzy. Post-holiday letdown. Each of these, or the cumulative effects of them all, can result in a case of the "holiday blues" - or even more serious

very distant. In the face of such adversities, the belief that we will survive these times and have the strength to get through them may seem impossible to hold on to. If you find yourself or a loved one unable to find the hope that we all need to sustain us, allow the staff at Guided Visions Counseling Center to help.

Guided Visions Counseling Center is a community-focused organization providing therapeutic counseling services for adults, youth and families in the Greater Baltimore area. We are dedicated to providing our clients with quality treatment and care in a safe, nurturing and supportive environment.

I encourage you to take this time to think of what hope means to you and if you discover the hope that once filled your life is distant or silent, call us. If you find your hope springs eternal, share it with others.

Merry Christmas! Happy Holidays!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Hope Springs Eternal	1
Holidays Got You Down?	1
Anger Management	2
Vision, Mission and Philosophy	5
Our Staff	5
Upcoming Events	6

Please see *Holidays* on page 3

Anger Management

By Jennifer Dudderar, Clinical Director

Although anger is a normal human emotion, it can be one of the most difficult to control and channel appropriately. Learning about the nature and power of anger can both normalize the experience of anger as well as provide appropriate awareness and coping skills to manage one's feelings and behavior. A popular anger management resource, "In Control," offers ten insightful points in anger management.

1. Anger is a normal and natural human feeling.
2. An anger trigger is a situation or event that sets us off.
3. An anger setting is a place where we get angry.
4. An anger log helps us reflect on how we handled our anger this time and decide how we might handle it better next time.
5. Anger management helps us recognize our anger, interrupt ourselves before we behave inappropriately, and then substitute an anger management tool.
6. Anger shows itself in our physiology (our bodies). Deep breathing, counting, and muscle relaxation are examples of physiological tools for anger management.
7. What we think to ourselves has an effect on how angry we get. Self-talk and self-statements are thinking tools for anger management.
8. What we choose to do can help us stay calm and in control. Walking away or talking things out with a friend are examples of behavioral tools for anger management.
9. When we manage anger well, we stay in control, respect people and property, and get positive results.
10. Anger management helps us make our anger work for us: We think ahead and make plans to stay calm and in control.

"Anger is a normal and natural feeling."



Holidays from page 1

conditions, such as depression or anxiety disorders.

Potential factors of holiday stress:

Increased levels of stress are invariably cited as one of the biggest contributors to the “holiday blues”. In addition to stress, some of the other common factors that can lead one down this path include:

- Unrealistic expectations
- Feeling overwhelmed by over-commercialization
- Reminders of past losses of significant loved ones
- Financial constraints and demands
- The inability or obligation to be with family and friends
- Tension caused by the additional demands of shopping in holiday crowds, heavier traffic, entertaining, holiday baking, long-distance travel, family reunions and/or houseguests
- Adapting to changes in family configurations and logistics for celebrating together caused by such new situations as divorce, marriage, blended families, adolescents who no longer celebrate the holidays as “children”, and grown children establishing their own independent holiday traditions
- Fatigue

Helpful Ways to Keep Stress to a Minimum

- Oftentimes, people try to counter the emotional strain they’re feeling by drinking more than they should, over-eating, over-spending, or even placing still further demands on themselves to impress others and ensure the perfect holiday. Throughout the coming weeks, consider engaging some of the following strategies for getting around potential sources of the “holiday blues”:

Keep your expectations for the holiday season manageable:

- Be realistic about what you can and cannot do – as well as what you want to do and don’t want to do. Although the holidays often mean trying to fit a lot of activities into a short period of time, pace yourself and, to the degree it’s possible, try not to place your entire focus on just one day (e.g. Thanksgiving Day, Christmas morning, New Year’s Eve), instead, remember it’s an entire season of holiday sentiment and that activities can be spread out to help increase enjoyment and lessen stress. Set realistic goals for yourself; make a list and prioritize the most important activities; ask for and accept help; simplify!

Remember the holiday season does not banish reasons for feeling sad or lonely:

During the holiday season, there’s room for feelings such as sadness and/or loneliness to be present along with other more joyful emotions. You may be feeling out of sorts and periodically out of sync with the season’s “jollier” aspects because of a current stressor. When you feel down, avoid critical self- and try to articulate the understanding you need from those around you. You might also consider seeking the help of a therapist to help you sort out your feelings and deal with troubling issues.

Limit predictable sources of stress:

If you feel the annual trappings of shopping, decorating, cooking and attending social events risk becoming overwhelming and stressful, use discretion and limit the activities you commit to.

Please see *Holidays* on page 4

Holidays from page 3

- **Don't fall prey to commercial hype:**
Advertisers would like to have you believe that "if you really loved your spouse" you'd give him or her that expensive new gadget or piece of jewelry or that you should be the "perfect Santa" and grant your kids' wishes for this year's pricey crazes.

Recognize the ads and commercials as hype that manufacturers and stores have to do to benefit optimally from the season. You can show love and caring in lots of thoughtful ways which don't cost a lot and that make the holiday all the more meaningful and personal.

Get together with friends and family members:

- As much as possible, share the holidays with friends and family members, in person; as well as by phone, e-mail, and mail. The holiday season can also be a good time to contact someone you have not heard from for awhile. If you have recently suffered the loss of someone especially close, spend time with special friends and family members with whom you can reminisce and share stories and warm memories about your loved one.

Attend holiday community events:

- Most communities offer special events during the holidays, such as theatrical and orchestral performances, that can be enjoyable to look forward to and to attend.

Join a social group:

- Feelings of loneliness and isolation can often be remedied by participating in activities with others. This can also help in

opening up the potential for making new friends. You might consider looking into groups affiliated with your local church, museum, library or community center.

Don't abandon healthy habits:

- Don't feel pressured to eat more than you're accustomed to just because it's the holiday season. And, since many of the season's parties and social gatherings include alcohol, be aware that excessive drinking will only contribute to or increase feelings of overwhelm or depression. Alcohol is NOT an antidepressant and, in fact, often worsens mood.

Make the time to get physical exercise:

- Exercising, for example, aerobics, walking, skiing, hiking, yoga, or swimming, can help burn away a lot of stress as well as the extra calories of holiday meals.

PSA:

- The demands of the holiday season can overload an already stressed, almost depressed emotional system. If you are unable to shake what you think are the "holiday blues", you may be suffering from depression. The difference between the "holiday blues" and depression is essentially based on the duration of the symptoms and the degree of severity.

****Suicidal ideation is always a serious matter and should be immediately responded to by enlisting professional assistance, for instance, calling "911", and/or seeking help from a local suicide hotline, and/or contacting a local mental health professional.**

Our Vision

We envision empowerment of individuals and families by providing counseling services that balance the resources of a clinical agency with personalized attention of a private practice.

Our Mission

Our spiritual call is to enable our community's most vulnerable individuals to access and utilize their personal strengths by providing comprehensive, holistic treatment with honor and dignity.

Our Values

We recognize the diversity and worth of each individual we meet.

We value children as the future of our society and promote their right to care and nurturing, in a safe and healthy environment.

We recognize that healthy families are critical to a healthy society.

We respect elders. They represent wisdom and provide each of us with a rich history of our community.

We encourage and assist in the spiritual growth and integration of individuals while respecting the diversity of our clients.

Our Philosophy

Guided Visions operates on the belief that every person has the inner capacity to learn life-changing behaviors, grow from their experiences and heal in order to become happier, more fulfilled members of the community. Our programs and services are based on the premise that growth is a process and not a one-time event.

Our Clinical Staff

Director	Karen Mercer
Clinical Director	Jennifer Dudderar
Therapist	Robert D. Matthews
Therapist	Dr. Karyn Felder



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"Providing a Beacon of Light"

Upcoming Events

Anger Management Group for Teens
Begins February 2009

How to Spot a Dangerous Man!
Begins February 2009

Journey of Personal Growth and
Development Group
Begins mid-February 2009

Raising Great Kids! Parenting Group
Begins soon

Call for more information - 410-744-
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We're on the Web!

Visit us at:
www.guidedvisions.net

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