



SOLUTIONS

20 Years of Help and Hope for Your Mind and Spirit

VOLUME 19, ISSUE 3

Winter 2005

Beating the Blues Finding Warmth in Winter

The craziness of the holidays is over, and you're back into your daily routine. In the second session of our two-part "Handling the Holiday" workshop, we will focus on the Winter Blues. Why do we feel let down after the Holidays? What changes can help us make it through the dark nights of winter? The emphasis will be getting out old stress and ushering in new serenity.

You can attend Part 2 even if you missed Part 1. Please visit our website for directions. Call (518) 374-3514 to register. Cost: \$25.00.

Samaritan Counseling Center
Presented by Jenness Clairmont, LCSW
220 N. Ballston Avenue, Scotia
Wednesday, January 18
7:00 - 9:00 PM

Blooming Grove Reformed Church
Presented by Maria Bove, LCSW
706 Blooming Grove Drive, Rensselaer
Wednesday, January 18
7:00 - 9:00 PM

First Presbyterian Church
Presented by Douglas Stephens, Ed.D.,
LCSW
22 West High Street, Ballston Spa
Monday, January 23
7:00 - 9:00 PM

EYES WIDE OPEN Removing the Blinders from Sexual Satisfaction

On Sunday, February 12, The Couples Clinic invites you and your Valentine to a special dinner at The Desmond! The program includes a three-hour workshop presented by David C. Olsen, Ph.D., author of *The Couples Survival Workbook*.

More information will be mailed soon!
Preregistration is required. Please call
(518) 374-3514.

You Can Handle the Holiday Without Getting Heartburn

Maria Bove, LCSW
Jenness Clairmont, LCSW

Parties, shopping, laughter, and good times with family and friends mark the holiday season. And if you had any doubts, a barrage of eye-catching advertisements and constant holiday music are at the ready to convince us that this "is the most wonderful time of the year!" Then why so tense?

More than a million people experience depression during the holidays, and many more experience intense anxiety or panic. Feelings associated with loss, family conflicts, and the pressure to create an ideal holiday despite family problems, limited finances, and excess food and alcohol can lead us far from what we had hoped for in season. For some, the experience is more of a nightmare than a fantasy.

Family gatherings bring pleasure and pain at this time of year. Many people lack the physical presence of family members nearby or have breaks in their family relationships, both of which can bring feelings of grief and loss. Yet we often do not acknowledge, much less tend to these feelings because, "we're not supposed to have them." ("It's the most wonderful time of the year," remember?) Whether a family is just starting out, already has defined roles, or is in a state of transition, the challenge is to adjust accord-

ingly. Family roles are greatly influenced by gender, birth order, age, and culture, and they become more sharply defined during times of stress. Are you aware of your family role and how it contributes to your stress?

Food and alcohol are woven into celebrations and traditions during the holidays. It's easy to overindulge in these tempting offerings. Often extended as a sign of hospitality, it may feel awkward to decline. Food and alcohol are often used to "numb out" emotional discomfort. Our family roles are exposed at the family dinner table, leaving us vulnerable to old patterns, and many of us saw modeled or learned to deal with uncomfortable fam-

ily roles by consuming food and alcohol. Knowing your family role and breaking old patterns is crucial in managing your stress.

Finances are the most tangible source of holiday stress. Our economic culture promotes spending beyond our means. Bankruptcy doesn't carry the stigma it once did; many adults model a lifestyle of living comfortably while accepting debt; and children often demand rather than ask for the hot items they "must have." Standing firm in the face of your children's' toy lust is a challenge in itself.

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*Family gatherings bring both
pleasure and pain at this time
of year.*

For more information about any of Samaritan's Programs or Services
visits our website! www.samaritancounselingcenter.org

continued from front ...

Lowering Your Stress

- **Be realistic.** Being realistic about your time, and expectations of yourself and others can take the pressure off.
- **Plan.** Planning can prevent last-minute time crunches and overspending on gifts or shipping, "because I waited to the last minute."
- **Be flexible.** When best-laid plans fall through, roll with it and be open to alternatives.
- **Cultivate calm.** Family problems don't magically go away, and sometimes it seems like it would be easier to cut off from family or repeat old patterns when we feel stressed. A key to non-reactivity is managing stress in the moment. If you typically react strongly to certain people, try focusing on breathing, and a simple affirmation that makes sense for you, like, "I don't need others to agree with me." Ask a friend or therapist for more ideas on using affirmations. "Changing the flow" by changing the situation can

lower our emotional temperature. Take a break, speak with someone else, take a walk, watch a movie, read, etc. Our feelings change when we focus on what we need rather than on what someone else is doing or saying.

- **Set limits.** Recognize you likely will eat or drink more than usual, and give yourself some leeway. But be aware of the effects food and alcohol have on your judgment, energy level, mood, and reactions.
- **Budget.** Be creative. Personal, thoughtful items made or chosen with care, and giving your time are gifts that reflect the true spirit of the holidays. Memories are priceless.

Staying sane during the "holiday" may mean deviating from old family patterns and familiar tensions, but it will most likely lead to healthier, more satisfying holidays. Practice using these tools today, and enjoy yourself!

Care of the Soul

A Day with Best-Selling Author Thomas Moore

Mark your calendars for our **Twentieth Anniversary Dinner** on Sunday, March 26 at Glen Sanders Mansion. Includes a key note speech and book-signing with renowned speaker and best-selling author Thomas Moore. More information to follow. Early registration is available. Please call (518) 374-3514.

Care of the Soul Workshop

Date: Saturday, March 25
 Time: 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM
 Place: Niskayuna Reformed Church
 Cost: \$30, lunch is provided

Group Therapy Opportunities

**Clergy Support
for Men and Women**
 Second and Fourth Fridays
 \$45 per session
 Contact Pam Ennis
 (518) 374-3278 x401

**Trauma Survivors
for Women**
 Tuesdays
 \$45 per session
 Contact Pam Ennis
 (518) 374-3278 x401

**Depression Support
for Men and Women**
 Thursdays, starting November 10
*Potential members must call for a
depression screening.*
 \$45 per session, plus cost of workbook
 Contact Pam Ennis
 (518) 374-3278 x401

Clergy Spouse Support
 Days and times set around need
 Contact Keli Rugenstein
 (518) 374-3278 x441

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Top Five Ways to Ruin your Holiday (or Someone Else's)

1. Talk incessantly about your children's accomplishments during the year
2. Share insights you gained from therapy about your family's shortcomings
3. Start political and religious debates
4. Push others into traditions they do not want to participate in
5. Expect to be waited on; the dishes will do themselves.

Solutions is published by Samaritan Counseling Center of the Capital Region, 220 North Ballston Ave., Scotia, NY 12302, (518) 374-3514, fax: (518) 374-9193, online at www.samaritancounselingcenter.org.

Samaritan Services: Individual, Couples, Family & Group Therapy, Educational Workshops, Professional/Organizational Consultation.
Office Locations: Schenectady/Scotia, Albany, Rensselaer, Clifton Park, Jonesville, Ballston Spa, Wilton. Please call the Scotia office at (518) 374-3514 to schedule an appointment. Financial statements for Samaritan Counseling Center of the Capital Region are available upon request through the New York State Attorney General's office.