

Parish Nursing newslink

A newsletter for and about Parish Nurses

Fragile Things

The Advent season will soon be on us, a time of celebrations, a time of joy, a time of grief renewal for some, a time of financial stress for many. Working towards a balanced holiday, we acknowledge the stresses as we prepare for the joy.

In all our preparations, we are reminded that as parish nurses we are called to be present to the "fragile things of life". I found this wonder piece and want to share it with you this season!

Willy, a talented artist, potter and friend of mine, recently had her first art show. Friends and family were invited to the pre-opening reception. Willy's five-year-old godchild, Megan, was led carefully through the gallery while her mother pointed out each piece, telling her not to touch anything that might break. At the end of the day, Willy asked "What do you like best of all the things you see here?" Megan leaned forward and whispered, "I want to touch the fragile things."

Late that night I received a phone call from my mother. "Honey, Grandmother passed away tonight." We'd all been expecting it. She was ninety-one years old. But just the day before, she had been correcting my grammar and teasing the nurses saying, "it sure is hard to be a princess around here." And I sat on the bed with tears in my eyes and thought "Life is so very frail. I want to touch the fragile things."

Jesus took the time to play with the children. He took the time to notice the lilies, swaying fragrantly in the field. He took the time to notice a baby sparrow that had fallen to the ground. He took the time to notice the number of fine gray hairs on an old man's head. He took the time to hold the hands of a little girl and time to weep with a relieving family.

Most of life is centered on attaining fragile things, but we often lose sight of their true meaning and begin to sacrifice ourselves to the process of acquiring them or their substitutes.

Jesus warned about a generation that was always out looking for signs but missing the breezes. He told us about a place and time where all tears would be wiped away. Where the lion would lie down with the lamb. Where everyone would know and appreciate the fragile things. But the machines of humanity just kept on going...the power machines, the hunger machines, the let's-get-back-to-the-rules machines, the let's-talk-bottom-line machines. The status quo. Jesus touched the fragile things - (and I hope that you take the time to touch them too.) Taken from: Jesus, CEO, 1995, Laurie Beth Jones



Holiday Loneliness

Loneliness - One of the most comforting truths of the Bible is that we have a Savior God who understands our emotions.

— Matthew 11, 28 - 30

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

The old Elvis song “Blue Christmas” describes the flip side of holiday joy. In the song everything is seen through loneliness...even a blue Christmas tree and snowflakes. No matter how you observe the holidays, the season is supposed to be a time filled with happiness, festivity, family fun and social events. But for many people, the holidays are the loneliest time of year. The feelings result from divorce, death of a loved one, family separation, broken relationship, or

other stressful life situations. Preparing for this challenging time of year by developing coping skills can ease the sadness, anxiety, and depression of spending time alone.

Ways to feel better

Do something nice for someone else. “Adopt” a senior who is alone at the holidays. Buy gifts for a needy family. There are infinite ways you can be of service to others. It’s guaranteed you’ll lift your spirits, and you may find you’re not spending the holidays alone!

Eat right, exercise and rest.

Eating a healthy diet, getting enough exercise, and sleeping well are all important in coping with mood disorders, including anxiety and depression.

Accept holiday invitations even if it’s from someone you hardly know, graciously accept it. There’s no better time to make

new friends and allow someone to do something nice for you!

Talk to someone. Sharing your feelings of sadness or depression can help alleviate those feelings. If your family lives too far to visit, call them frequently around the holidays.

Find support. Support from people fights loneliness. Every community has a variety of support groups that you may feel comfortable attending. Call the community education department of your local hospital.



December Health Observances

- Loneliness/infusing hope into the holidays www.christchurchsummit.org
- Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention www.3dmonth.org
- Safe Toys and Gifts Month www.preventblindness.org
- 1 - 7 Aplastic Anemia Awareness Week www.aamds.org
- 5 - 11 Hand Washing Awareness Week www.henrythehand.com

Contact Sally for bulletin starters and material from the resource room!

January

Seasonal Affective Disorder

Celebrating the Thanksgiving festival begins our final descent down to the winter solstice. As the last of the leaves fall and the sun sinks lower on the horizon the spirits of some sink with it; and as the days grow shorter and shorter, too grows the memory of sunshine and warmth. With the overcast sky above, the blustery winds, how difficult it is for some to keep their inner fires burning. Many become SAD. That is, they may develop Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

What causes SAD

We become more vulnerable to feelings of aloneness and other sad thoughts because of the decreasing hours of daylight, which sets the stage for depression.

SAD Symptoms

SAD is more than just a case of the blahs. Winter Depressions can be very

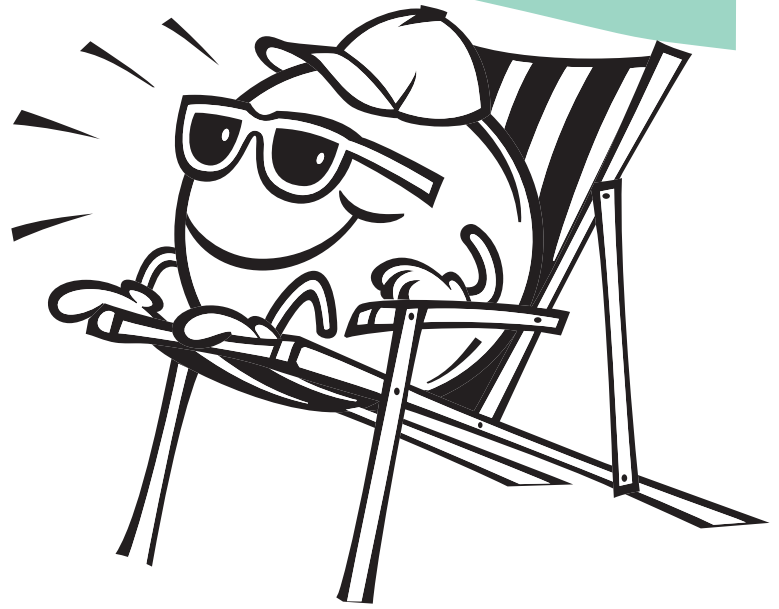
severe. The symptoms can be enough to disturb how you function. Some people become sadder, to the point of experiencing real grief at times. Others become more anxious, and yet others become more irritable. At times the irritability can be so extreme that feelings of violence can erupt. This perhaps is part of the reason why the incidence of child abuse seems to increase during the dark months.

Other symptoms

Physical activity, almost any sort, seems to be just too much. On the other hand, appetite and especially craving for carbohydrates (sugars, starches or alcohol) actually increases. Most people with SAD end up sleeping for very long hours.

Holidays and festivals of light

There are many who now believe that the most important reasons for festivals of light has more to do with the cycle of seasons than with true historical dates. According to this thinking, the more important reason for the holidays occurring when they do is to light up the spirits during the darkest days!



Tips for avoiding the winter blahs, blues, or SAD

- Pay attention; if your spirits begin to sink, take action.
- Plan active events for yourself.
- Expose yourself to bright light.
- Stay physically active.
- If you feel yourself sinking, don't feel ashamed or try to hide it, instead seek competent professional help.

What you learn, you can probably do for yourself in all the falls and winters to come.

Bright light therapy (BLT)

BLT is the most established treatment for SAD. BLT consists of looking at special broad spectrum bright lights from one-half to three hours a day, generally in the morning hours. One should not stare directly into the lights because of possible eye damage.

BLT is unlikely to help in certain situations because depressed mood is not always related to the decreasing number of daylight hours.

Gila Lindsley, Ph.D, ACP <http://world.std.com/~halberst/contrib/sad.html>

January Health Observances

Seasonal Affective Disorder www.nmha.org
National Volunteer Blood Donor Month
..... www.aabb.org
Cervical Cancer Screening Month
..... www.wcn.org
National Birth Defects Prevention Month .
..... www.marchofdimes.com
Glaucoma Awareness Month
..... www.preventblindness.org
Thyroid Awareness Month www.aace.com
18 - 24 Healthy Weight Week
..... www.healthyweight.net

Contact Sally for bulletin starters and material from the resource room!

Support Group Schedule

Tuesday, Nov. 9, 2004 - The November support group meeting will be at St. John Oakland Hospital, 27351 Dequindre, (between 11 and 12 Mile Rd. on the West side), Madison Heights, at the Education Center.

Tuesday, Feb. 8, 2005 and **Tuesday, May 10, 2005** -, St. John Health, Corporate Services Building, 28000 Dequindre, (between 11 & 12 Mile Roads on the East side), in N31 (north building). All meetings begin at 8:30 a.m. and run until noon.

Community Education Nights

Nov. 11- Holiday Food Safety

Dec. 9 - Dealing with Holiday Stress
Knowledge is power especially when it comes to your health. Join us at the Van Elslander Cancer Center at St. John Hospital for our free community education night programs. Our clinical experts discuss topics from cancer prevention, to new treatments and therapies, to support for patients and families. Offered on the second Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m., the programs are free of charge and are open to the public. To register or for more information, call 1-866-246-4673.

Upcoming Events

- **God With Us** - quarterly gathering for parish nurses/health ministers. Noon - 2 p.m. "Opening Ourselves to the Quiet-A Meditative Experience" Sally McCuen, Spiritual Director. Fellowship, lunch, networking, presentation and prayer. Host: Maureen Duncan, St. Augustine Catholic Church, Richmond, 586.727.5215.
- **Blood Drive** - Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church in Detroit, **Friday, Nov. 26**, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. This would be a great way to begin the Advent Season!
- **SHINE (spirit, health, image, nutrition and exercise)** Marie Herbon is offering a program at Amazing Grace Lutheran in Warren. The program is on the second and fourth Monday at 7 p.m. with exercise on Wednesday at 6:45 p.m. Amazing Grace is also offering chair dancing (chair aerobics and yoga) on Thursdays at 10 a.m. St. Thomas Lutheran in Sterling Heights is offering an exercise class on Tuesday, 6:45 p.m. All classes end by Dec. 16. Contact Marie for more information at 313.343.4421.
- **Project FOCUS** (families overcoming crisis and understanding strengths). The goals of Project Focus are to help families affected by alcohol or other drug use disorders and the development of safe and healthy coping strategies. The 12-week program will be offered at Cross Lutheran Church in Clinton Twp. and Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church in Warren beginning January 13, 2005. Call CARE (community Assessment referral and Education) for more information 586.541.0033 ext. 216.
- **Called to Serve: the Role of the Servant in the Scriptures** - Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2005. During the Lenten season the Lectionary provides us with a variety of rich biblical texts. Many of these Scriptures focus on service and the role of the servant. This session will explore the meaning of "servant" within the Bible and take a closer look at some of the texts that are especially significant within this liturgical season. Contact The Dominican Center for Religious Development at 313.387.9574 or www.dominicancenter.org.

Contact information

*Karen Beger, RN, MED, Corporate Director,
Community Health*

Office - Corporate Services Building
586-753-1484 Fax: 586-753-1488

Maureen Duncan, RN, Parish Nurse Coordinator

Office - St. John River District Hospital
810-329-5348 Fax: 810-326-4710

Tammi Pollum, RN, BSN, Parish Nurse Coordinator

Office - Corporate Services Building
586-753-1190 Fax: 586-753-1187

Sally Sterr, Administrative Assistant

Office - Corporate Services Building
586-753-1484 Fax: 586-753-1488
e-mail address: parishnurse@stjohn.org

Eight Gifts That Don't Cost Anything

1. THE GIFT OF LISTENING

But you must REALLY listen. No interrupting, no daydreaming, no planning your response. Just listening.

2. THE GIFT OF AFFECTION

Be generous with appropriate hugs, kisses, pats on the back and handholds. Let these small actions demonstrate the love you have for family and friends.

3. THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER

Clip cartoons. Share articles and funny stories. Your gift will say, "I love to laugh with you."

4. THE GIFT OF A WRITTEN NOTE

It can be a simple "Thanks for the help" note or a full sonnet. A brief, handwritten note may be remembered for a lifetime, and may even change a life.

5. THE GIFT OF A COMPLIMENT

A simple and sincere, "You look great in red," "You did a super job" or "That was a wonderful meal" can make someone's day.

6. THE GIFT OF A FAVOR

Every day, go out of your way to do something kind.

7. THE GIFT OF SOLITUDE

There are times when we want nothing better than to be left alone. Be sensitive to those times and give the gift of solitude to others.

8. THE GIFT OF A CHEERFUL DISPOSITION

The easiest way to feel good is to extend a kind word to someone, really it's not that hard to say, Hello or Thank You.



Good Things from St. Louis

Several nurses from the Detroit area attended the recent Westburg Symposium in St. Louis. All felt the time was well spent and we look forward to several new programs. As an enticement, Louise and Maureen will be introducing us to “Tea Ministry” at the November Support Group meeting! This was a breakout session that they attended and were inspired by. Other programs that we look forward to placing in the resource room include “Lectio Divina” praying the sacred scriptures, the use of music therapy, “When Blue is Not A Color” grief materials, and caregiving materials.

Also during the time that we were in St. Louis, Karen, Tammi and Maureen attended a meeting with Ascension Parish Nurse Coordinators from across the United States. And, Ascension Health leaders met early in the week with two coordinators to discuss how our ministry supports the mission, vision and values of Ascension Health.

They also discussed the work being done by a committee of parish nurse leaders, under the auspices of Health Ministry Association, on updating the Scope and Standards of Parish Nursing. There has been much debate on the draft changes. If you are interested in reviewing the draft, log onto <http://ipnrc.parishnurses.org> web site.

New Resources!

Putting together a workshop on specific topics can be a hassle. The resource room has just added the following topic-focused workshop material. Please contact for these “ready to run” resources!

- *Spiritual Journeys* – Personal Growth Workshop
- *Creative Compromise* – Conflict Management Workshop
- *Life – It’s Worth Living* – Self-Esteem Workshop
- *Spend Time Where It Counts* – Time Management Workshop
- *The AAABC’S of Stress* – Stress Management Workshop
- *On The Job Stress* – Stress Management Workshop
- *Co For The Gold* – Lifestyle Change Workshop
- *Whole Person Wellness* – Healthy Living Workshop
- *Keep Your Cool* – Anger Management Workshop
- *Coping With Loss* – Grief Workshop



Holiday Thought

With all the hubbub that surrounds the holidays, having a period of silence is a wonderful gift to share with your children and other loved ones. Start with a silent evening. Or spend even an hour of reverential silence on Christmas Eve. That silence will connect you with others in ways that are far more potent than speech.

“Silent Night” is a favorite Christmas carol for many of us. Just think of the *feelings* those words – *silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright* – invoke in your heart. With a little practice, having a true silent night could become one of your favorite holiday traditions.

Taken from: *Simplify Your Christmas*,
Elaine St. James