

Surviving the Stress of the Holidays

By Jenelle N. Boo, M.A.

The fall and winter months bring holiday after holiday, which for many people, bring joy, fondly remembered traditions, and time spent with loved ones. For others, however, the holidays also bring stress, extra responsibility, and unpleasant family members. Even for those of you who love the holidays, the experience is often not without stress. So...how do you survive the holiday season while taking advantage of all its pleasantness *and* retaining your sanity? Simple! The following are several suggestions that can help your holidays come and go more smoothly!!

Take Care of Yourself!

Holidays are often a time when you work to do for others. Before you can successfully tackle your holiday responsibilities, you have to take care of you! This means meeting your body's basic needs first. So, when you are busy and most tempted to go for fast food or to pull an all-nighter, STOP! Take a moment to attend to a healthy diet, drinking plenty of water, getting plenty of rest, and exercising! Even making one of these things a priority can positively impact your life!

Delegate!

Resist the urge to attempt to take control of anything and everything around you! How often do you take responsibility for tasks that could just as easily be delegated to another responsible party? If you share your residence with family or

roommates, it's not your sole responsibility to clean up the house. Alternatively, if you're hosting a big holiday meal, why not ask for help in preparing some of your favorite dishes? Take time to think about how many of the things on your To-Do list really *have* to be done by you!

Prioritize and Plan Ahead!

When you begin to feel overwhelmed by the stress of the holiday season, take a moment to regroup and identify your priorities. This applies to simple tasks on your

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daily To-Do list *and* to important life values. Consider the bottom line and ask yourself why you are experiencing stress in the first place. Is it because you are concerned about the happiness of your family or friends? If so, how can you value your family without overwhelming yourself? Additionally, engage in as

much advanced planning as your circumstances permit. Being aware of upcoming plans and responsibilities can remove stress that can accompany surprise.

Have Realistic Expectations!

If your family life has traditionally been more Bundy than Brady, don't expect this to change around the holiday season! It can be tempting to get wrapped up in the holiday season and to romanticize what *could* be. Don't compare your family to other families. Accept the reality of your life as it is, including your ability to accomplish tasks.

Set Boundaries!

Remember that it is acceptable, and encouraged, to say "No!" when you cannot meet every obligation that you encounter! Take time to consider who your actions and favors will truly benefit. Additionally, does the benefit that your actions provide for others outweigh what they may cost you?

Live Simply and Use Moderation!

Holidays are times when overindulgence can abound! This is not the time to indulge in excess, whether it is in eating, drinking, or spending. During this time of year it can be especially helpful to attempt to follow your traditional pattern of eating and drinking and to budget your funds to avoid excess spending. Embracing the routine of your everyday life can be an important stress-busting tactic!

Get Counseling!

For many people, the stress that accompanies the holiday season can feel so overwhelming that, despite following the above tips, functioning from day to day can be difficult. For many, holidays are accompanied by painful memories of lost loved ones and distress of holidays past. If you can relate to this, you might consider speaking to a professional. Taking an hour out of your weekly schedule to speak with a counselor about your feelings, circumstances, goals, and plans could be the form of self-care that helps you function throughout the season! If you are interested in speaking to a professional counselor, contact the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047 for more information.

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Caring Arts Now Accepting Spring Referrals



Children at the Caring-Art-A-Thon create a caterpillar mural.



By Heather Wood, M.A.

The Caring Arts Program is a psychoeducational group for children in kindergarten through 5th grade who have been diagnosed with emotional disorders (e.g., ADHD, autism, Asperger's, depression, anxiety) and their families. The program was designed for the children to have fun, feel empowered, gain a sense of belonging, and learn social skills. The children participate in dance/yoga, art, music, and counseling activities designed to improve interpersonal skills and to teach children to identify and cope with emotions.

The program also provides parents of these children with respite time and helpful information about parenting.

The program was developed by Hillcroft Inc. and Ball State University's Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services. It features teaching artists from Very Special Arts of Indiana, and master's and doctoral level counselors from the Counseling Department. The program runs for 9-10 weeks on Saturday from 9am-12pm. A one-week summer program is also offered.

Children can be referred by counselors, psychiatrists, doctors, and teachers to participate in the program. We are now accepting referrals for the spring semester! If you are interested, please call the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047 and leave a message for Heather.

Monthly Guidance

Dear MG,

Last Christmas, a friend of mine passed away in an automobile accident. I am still trying to grieve his death and I'm concerned that this Christmas will be especially difficult because of the reminder. How do I deal?

Sincerely,
Sad Reminder

Dear Sad Reminder,

Losing a close friend is one of the most difficult things to experience in life. During the time that you get to know someone, a magical thing happens. Each moment that you spend with that person, a memory, a thought or an experience is implanted into your brain. Your personality and being is subtly altered and enhanced by that person's existence in your life. That person finally becomes a part of you as much as you become a part of them. So, losing them is literally like losing a part of you. The reminder of your friend's death is

like reliving the pain of losing that part of you over and over again. Going through that takes a toll on our minds, bodies, and seems to set us back. But you have something great working for you! Having the awareness that this Christmas may be a difficult time for you and taking some beginning steps to prepare, is huge! It takes a lot of strength to have that awareness, and your great insight will work on your behalf.

As it pertains to how to deal, there are many things that people do to cope. Each person is unique in finding out what

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works for them, but the underlying theme seems to be one that involves other people. Remembering, commemorating, and talking about your dear friend with others can be releasing. The experience may not only be helpful for you, but also for others who have been affected by your friend's death. Together, the difficulty of the loss is shared, rather than carried alone. This opportunity will not only revive your precious

memories of your friend, but also help you engage in the magic of building other bonds and memories.

Be cautioned to stay away from using alcohol, drugs, or overeating to cope. Although tempting, these substances usually make us feel worse. If things get especially difficult, don't forget that you have the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic on your side. Call (765) 285-8047 to see a counselor for that extra help.

Happy Holidays,

MG

Monthly Guidance [MG] is here to answer questions about relationships and personal issues. If you would like to ask MG a question, you may call the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic and leave an anonymous message for MG. Or, you may send your question in writing to the address on the back page of this newsletter. If you choose to ask MG a question, the identity of the person submitting the question will remain completely anonymous. Please keep in mind when writing your questions that space is limited. Due to time constraints, MG cannot answer all questions, but will try to choose questions that are representative of a broad range of issues. If your question does not get answered and you would like to discuss it, please call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047.

Please be advised that MG is neither a crisis/emergency service nor a correspondence therapy service. If you need either immediate attention or ongoing therapy, call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047.

Managing Holiday Stress With Exercise

By Jill Sullivan, M.A.

Shopping, eating, traveling, and being with family and friends all sound like exciting and fun activities individually, but when the holiday season arrives these activities in combination can be stressful. Every person experiences different levels and types of stress over the holidays. Also, there are things you find stressful that other people may not, and vice-versa! The key is to identify your holiday stresses, identify how you currently deal with them, and see if there may be healthier ways to relieve your holiday stress.

It is no surprise that people who manage their stress by unhealthy behaviors, such as drinking, smoking, or overeating, are more likely to have negative health consequences than people who manage their stress with healthier activities.

A healthy choice to manage holiday stress is exercise. While we all know that exercise is good for you, did you also know that exercise helps reduce levels of hormones that are caused by stress and increase the level of “feel good”

hormones. This will allow your body to feel less tense and more relaxed throughout the rest of the day. This doesn't mean you have to go to the gym for hours on end, but just 30 minutes of exercise a day could help reduce your overall stress level! Simple ideas for a short workout include taking a walk or practicing yoga. You can even find a winter activity like ice skating or sledding to exercise and have some winter fun!

As I once told a friend, if you're having a difficult time sticking to your exercise routine, get dressed and go to your exercise location. Nine times out of ten

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once you are dressed and at your exercise location (whether that is the gym, in front of your television, or outside) you'll feel encouraged to exercise. If you still don't feel like exercising, give yourself a break that day and pat yourself on the back for making an effort! At least you got up and moving for a few min-

utes!

Other fast, easy ways to make exercise part of your daily routine include things like taking the stairs instead of the elevator, walking instead of taking the bus, riding your bike to run an errand, or taking a walk with your dog. For fun you can put on some “jazzy” music and dance around while you pick up the house or watch your favorite television show. Exercise doesn't have to be boring, structured, or something that's dreaded. Just get up, get moving, and incorporate it into your daily life. As with many other activities it's sometimes more fun and enjoyable to buddy up and exercise. Create a buddy system with a spouse, friend, or co-worker and agree on days and times to exercise or agree to make small, lifestyle changes like talking the stairs together each morning. The goal is to become more active and to relieve some of that accumulating stress. Although that's difficult to do, especially around the holidays, the accountability to a friend can help!

While exercise takes energy to do, the positive outcome will be that you feel less tense and you will be better able to enjoy your family, friends, and holiday time. Have a happy, healthy, holiday season.

Important reminder: Please consult with your physician before engaging in or significantly changing your exercise routine.



Holiday Stress Buster Word Search



BOUNDARIES
BUDGET
COUNSELING
DELEGATE
EXERCISE
LAUGH
MEDITATE
MODERATION

PLAN
PREPARE
PRIORITIZE
RELAX
ROUTINE
SELFCARE
SIMPLIFY

Featured Counselor Profile:

Nikki Jones, M.S.

By Jenelle N. Boo, M.A.
With Nikki Jones, M.S.

Nikki Jones is a second-year doctoral student in the Department of Counseling Psychology. She is currently seeing clients at the Ball State University Counseling Center and at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic while taking courses and working for the department as an undergraduate instructor. She was gracious enough to sit down and share information about herself so that the community can get an idea about the diverse talents employed at the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic.

Hi Nikki! Can you tell us a little bit about your educational history?

I am originally from Daytona Beach, Florida, and am often surprised at how my education has moved me farther and farther away from my family. My interest in psychology actually began when I was in high school. When I was a junior, I took a psychology class as an elective and was hooked. I felt like psychology came more easily to me than any of my other classes. This was my first clue that I should go into psychology in some manner. However, I was also highly interested in art and photography at the time. So, I initially set out to get a degree in art therapy. I went to a very small college in Virginia and double majored in art and psychology. I loved both majors but eventually, after some research and reality checks, realized what I wanted to do was more in line with a counselor, not that of an art therapist. Therefore, in my senior year of college, I focused on psychology and ended up having a minor in art. I will always love art, and now see it more as a hobby. I use art as a way of helping me deal with stress rather than as part of my career. After completing my undergraduate degree, I went straight into a program to get a master's degree in counseling psychology. I had a wonderful opportunity to work with adolescents during my master's program and eventually decided to get a job working with this age group after I graduated.

Why did you decide to get your Ph.D. instead of practicing with your master's degree?

I worked for three years as an out-patient

therapist in Virginia after I graduated. During this time, I became certified as a substance abuse counselor; additionally, I gained a great deal of experience in working with adolescents and their families. However, even though I loved my work, I

“MY WORK IN A RURAL AREA... TAUGHT ME HOW TO BE THERE FOR MY CLIENTS, NO MATTER HOW I WAS IMPACTED BY WHAT WAS OCCURRING AROUND ME.”

began to realize that I needed more variety in my profession and knew that this would be possible with a doctoral degree. I love counseling, but I also enjoy teaching and doing research. With a Ph.D., I have the ability to contribute to the field of counseling psychology in other ways beyond clinical work alone.

What are your clinical interests?

Well, currently I have chosen to take a break from adolescents, since I feel I got a great amount of experience with them when I was working. At this point in my career, I am really open to working with all types of clients. I want to learn as much as I can while I am at Ball State, so I often work with clients who will allow me to have new experiences and learning opportunities while practicing within my competencies. I see my work with my clients as a continual learning experience, and honestly feel that I have grown a great deal as a counselor since coming back to school. However, in general, I would have to say that my interests surround diversity issues, sexuality, trauma, and crisis intervention.

Are you currently doing any research?

My main research interests surround rural issues. At this point, I am looking at rural, urban, and suburban differences among first generation college students. I am almost finished collecting this data and will begin working to publish the results in the spring. I am also getting ready to

begin my dissertation, in which I am interested in looking at rural, urban and suburban differences of adolescents who are sexual minorities.

What has been your most influential (or exciting, or enjoyable) work experience?

It is very difficult for me to say one thing in particular that has influenced me as a counselor. I feel that all my work has impacted me in some way. My work in a rural area of Virginia will always have a lasting impact on me. This is where my interest in researching urban/rural differences began. Being a part of such a community and being able to make an impact on that community touched me deeply. When certain instances occurred within the community, it not only hit me as a counselor, but it hit me as a community member. This was often a difficult task to negotiate, but it also taught me how to be there for my clients, no matter how I was impacted by what was occurring around me. This is also where my interest in working with trauma began. No matter what, Virginia is where my experiences as a counselor began, and I learned so much in the three years I spent there. I hated to leave, but knew that this was the next step for my career. Overall, I have been happy with my decision to pursue my doctoral degree at Ball State University!



Nikki Jones, M.S.
Second-Year Doctoral Student and Counselor

Featured Mental Health Issue:

Seasonal Affective Disorder

By Tricia Groff, M.S.

Almost everyone likes sunshine, and it is common to hear people complain about the chillier, darker days that winter brings. Sometimes, these winter changes are accompanied by significant changes in mood.

Seasonal Affective Disorder, often referred to as SAD, is a type of depression that is triggered by changes in seasons, with the most common type being winter-onset depression. In people affected, the seasonal changes produce a cycle in which people tend to feel good in the spring and summer but become lethargic and rather sad in the fall and winter seasons. In addition to lower mood and

less energy, people who suffer from SAD may tend to sleep too much, overeat, gain weight, and have a craving for carbohydrates such as mashed potatoes, cake, and holiday cookies! They also may have difficulty concentrating and experience higher than usual amounts of anxiety or

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER IS A TYPE OF DEPRESSION THAT IS TRIGGERED BY THE CHANGES IN SEASONS..."

grouchiness. While many people may feel "blue" in the winter or crave more comfort foods, those with SAD are different because they often have trouble performing their daily activities.

While there isn't a clear answer on the precise cause of Seasonal Affective Disorder, it's believed to be related to light because of the effectiveness of light therapy in treating it. It occurs more often at higher latitudes, and many people diagnosed with SAD are women. Also, it is interesting to note that the risk of being diagnosed with SAD decreases as people age.

Despite the negative impact of Seasonal Affective Disorder, several treatments are available to help ease the symptoms, so that people are not destined to be depressed every winter. These treatments include light therapies, anti-depressant medication, ionized-air reception, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and supplementation of the hormone melatonin. Light treatment uses specially designed lamps that provide more intense light than the usual household bulbs, and people sit in front of them for 30-60 minutes per day during the winter months. Ionized-air reception involves the release of charged particles while a person is sleeping. Both the anti-

depressants and the melatonin (which when correctly timed shifts the rhythms of hormones) should be prescribed and monitored by a medical doctor.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy is a type of counseling that is used

for addressing many mental health issues and is available at the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic. Additionally, both exercise and some extra time outside on sunny days are very helpful for people diagnosed with SAD and people who may have a milder form of it.

All of the above treatments have proven to be helpful, and once diagnosed, some people may try a combination of the above treatments to obtain maximum relief.

If you can relate to even a couple of the previously mentioned symptoms of SAD, it may be helpful to contact the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047 for more information or to speak with someone about your concerns.



Free Personality Assessment

By Sera Gruszka, M.A.

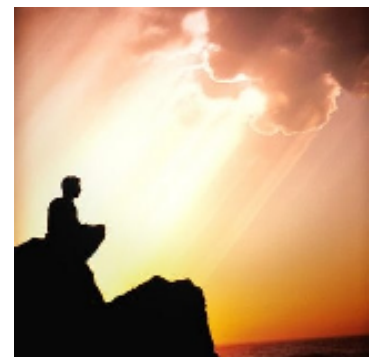
Would you like to learn more about yourself? If so, we would like to share a new and exciting service available to you.

From now until May 2009, you have the opportunity to take a personality measure (MMPI-2) and receive feedback on the results for **FREE**.

Typically, these services would cost about \$300. The information provided by the

personality measure may assist you and your therapist as you work on your goals in counseling.

This opportunity is part of a research study examining the impact of personality feedback. In order to participate in this study, you must be at least 19 years of age and be able to read at the 8th-grade level. If you are interested in participating or want more information, contact the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047.



Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic

Ball State University
TC 621
Muncie, IN 47306

Clinic Director: Theresa Kruczek, Ph.D., HSPP
Clinic Manager: Kenny Puckett
Clinic Assistants: Jenelle Boo, M.A.

Phone: (765) 285-8047

Clinic Advisory Committee

Don Nicholas, Ph.D., HSPP
Paul Spengler, Ph.D., HSPP
Sharon Bowman, Ph.D., HSPP

Mind Matters Contributors

Editor:

Jenelle N. Boo, M.A.

Staff Contributors:

Mona Ghosheh, M.Ed.
Tricia Groff, M.S.
Jill Sullivan, M. A.



Ball State University
Counseling Practicum Clinic

Teachers College, Sixth Floor
Room 621

Ten Story Building on the corner of
Riverside and McKinley

We're on the Web!

[http://www.bsu.edu/
counselingpsychology/clinic/](http://www.bsu.edu/counselingpsychology/clinic/)

Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic: Serving the Community Since 1969

Mission

- The clinic is a training and research facility for the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services.
- The clinic provides high quality, low-cost psychological services to the Delaware County community and beyond.

Service Providers

- Over 50 graduate student counselors under the supervision of faculty.
- Faculty supervisors are Licensed Psychologists and Counselors.

Services Offered

- Individual Counseling
- Couple Counseling
- Family Counseling
- Child/Adolescent Counseling
- Group Counseling with a focus on:
 - Parenting
 - Social skills
 - Anger control
 - Issues of concern to children and adolescents

Hours of Operation

- August-May
 - 9 AM to 9 PM M-Th
 - 9 AM to 12 PM Fri
- Summer hours are similar, but vary.
- The clinic is closed during university vacations and holidays.

All clients have the right to receive timely, competent counseling services consistent with the ethical principles and guidelines established by professional organizations. All counseling services provided at the Counseling Practicum Clinic are guided by the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the American Counseling Association, the American School Counseling Association, the American Rehab Counseling Association, the General Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services, and the Specialty Guidelines for the Delivery of Services by Counseling Psychologists.