

## *Food, Feelings and the Holidays*

### *Carolyn Costin MFT*

#### **Expectations**

A. Holidays are supposed to be Happy Times, why do so many people get depressed?

Reasons:

Expectations.....How it's supposed to be....what it really is  
Strained family relations (Do we have to be with them? Do I have to go?)  
No loved / special one..(I wish I could have that, seeing others makes it worse)  
No time...How can I do all the holiday stuff and all I usually do  
Money..I can't afford the holidays, especially now  
Food Fears.....

When it turns into: "Having to get it over with." ..... Something is wrong!

Use it for a time and excuse to do things you wouldn't ordinarily do:

Acknowledge friends, how you feel about them, things they have done over the year,  
bake with your kids or friends, sing, make things like your own cards and gifts,....

Examples: Tiles, shell ornaments, jewelry, flower arrangements, jars filled with stuff

Remember; *"A gift consists not in what is done or given but in the intention of the giver or doer."*.....Seneca

Go to bookstore for gift and for yourself, browse and buy a new book  
Be creative with decorating, gather pine cones, pine branches, berries  
Have a tree trimming party...(popcorn, crayons & construction paper, instant camera)  
Have a party with your close friends with a \$5 or \$10 dollar limit and gift exchange

It may seem hard for some of you to get a positive attitude. Every situation is different and I can't speak to all those personal problems that may be occurring in your life, but I offer this quote which I think covers all circumstances.....I hope it is helpful

*" We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in numbers, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken away from a man but one thing; the last of the human freedoms-... to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."*

Viktor Frankl

## **Attitude**

B. It's all in one's attitude how one makes it through these times and this is important to keep in mind for dealing with the holidays in general and with food in particular.

Quotes from clients:

"I don't want it to be another eating orgy, why can't it just be another meal?"

"I hate the whole holiday thing about food, the major focus is on food and it makes you feel weird if you are not."

"I'm upset because I'm going to blow my whole diet, I just can't resist it when my mom makes all my favorite foods."

"It's so chaotic, so much food, it makes me nervous and everyone is looking at me, thinking, 'what will she eat?'"

"It's a time when it's hard to get away from eating in front of others."

"I'm fine during the big meal when everyone is eating it's afterwards that night or the next day."

"I don't want everyone watching me, concerned with what I eat or don't eat, I know someone is going to comment on my weight."

"I feel obligated to eat, especially when it's a gift, and everyone makes a big issue out of eating."

"Every where you turn there is food, the office, parties, home, friends, even the bank!!!!!!"

Find ways to begin to feel and think differently about what the holidays could/should mean.

## **Behavior**

C. General Rules and Guidelines

**RULE # 1**      Don't say anything about anyone else's weight or food intake and Don't react or plan an appropriate reaction if someone says something to you.

**RULE # 2**      Put things in perspective

It's a short time; it's not a disaster

Be flexible and creative

Dieting in general should be in perspective, what's its place in life

So what if you gain a couple pounds

what's the worst that can happen

**RULE # 3**      Balance is the key

Focus on cans not can'ts ..... limit but don't deny

Avoid all or nothing/black or white thinking and behavior

Plan to indulge some, if you don't you have unrealistic persecutory expectations

Educate yourself to make good choices

Change Recipes, make substitutions

Examples: Peanuts, pretzels ----> brownies, nonfat ones, --->apple pie, baked apples

Allow some goodies at parties but don't just throw in the towel

Don't be on or off a diet during this time, be on your healthy eating plan

Add exercise to your routine, just take/make the time

Make sure to include several activities not involving food and make many of them active

Monte Nido Treatment Center and Carolyn Costin 310-457-9958

**RULE # 4 Plan ahead**

Plan your eating mindfully for the whole day if you are going to attend a party

Plan for special time for yourself to "get away"

Buy the ingredients for special things

Bring food you like and will for sure eat as a gift to your host or hostess

Talk to your relatives about any special requests you that will make you feel more comfortable

**RULE # 5 Be on the offense not the defense**

Your relatives are coming, but You Can Still Take Control

Have plenty of things to do; trimming tree, caroling, movies, walks, picnic at park/ beach

If you have a problem with a relative and yet are going to see them over the holidays:

Write a letter, Take person aside and talk, **You** make it better / livable

Create your own image not the T.V. Family, What is realistic for you

Let the people you love know what a gift they are to you already

Don't see things as an obligation, if you can't ...don't, or do differently

Spend time decorating people with good will

Pretend that peace on earth is directly tied to your behavior and good will

## **On Being A Christmas Angel**

**It's a time for angels.....and to practice living from the heart, a time to practice "Random Acts of Kindness"**