

Natural Path to Health ~ Change of Season

By Dr. Carol McIntyre

Seasonal change is upon us. The leaves are falling from the trees and the nights are getting colder. We are preparing for the winter season and the holidays are approaching quickly.

In Chinese medicine the element associated with autumn is Metal, as you recall from previous discussion. Metal has a downward motion, replicating the feelings we begin having to slow down. The days get shorter and we tend to want to retire earlier in the evening if we can.

Many of us struggle through this transitional time with seasonal affective disorder (SAD) - meaning we tend to feel increased sadness. This may be related to many different factors including low Vitamin D

levels. Most physicians are now testing for Vitamin D levels and supplementing accordingly. Taking cod liver oil as a fish oil supplement will also aid in increasing the levels of Vitamin D in the body.

Exercising also helps to elevate mood overall. Spending just a few minutes a day doing activity that increases the heart rate can give benefit. Also, doing activities such as Qigong and yoga can benefit by reducing cortisol levels and therefore reducing adrenal fatigue and hypothyroid symptoms; both of which can contribute to increased sadness.

Earth element is also involved in every transition of season. Focus on digestion during these times. Be thoughtful about what you eat (and how much) throughout the holidays. The most common focus for the new year is to lose the extra weight that

has been accumulated from excess eating over the holidays... don't let that be you!

As we transition further into winter we will all want to begin our hibernation. This is a very normal process. Winter season is related to the Water element. It is when we store up energy in preparation for the transition into spring and sprouting growth. This is the time to reconnecting with one's inner self.

I do hope that you all have wonderful holidays! The office will be closed Wednesday and Thursday, November 27th and 28th, for Thanksgiving. We will also be closing the week of Christmas (December 23rd - 27th) and re-opening on Monday December 30th. As always, I will be on call for any of my existing patients. Thanks for joining me. Be Well~

Better Parenting: Holidays

By Sonia Spackman MA, MFT

The last couple of years we have covered this subject prior to the holidays. Yet reminders can't hurt so it is never too late to make happier memories. For some kids whose parents are divorced or separated the holidays can be a nightmare.

Here are some ways that may help make the holidays better for some kids this year.

1. TAKE TIME AWAY IF YOU HAVE TO

DON'T allow yourself to be thrown together before you are ready. Time may be needed to get over any hard feelings or differences. *You may find it easier to be away and celebrate a second holiday after the holiday.*

DO understand you are still a parent and taking care of the kids is your first priority. *Maybe you can have a close relative or friend that can join you and help you get through the holidays so you will be able to celebrate with your children.* As you work at it, and try new things you can create new traditions that may make the holidays more enjoyable.

2. FOCUS ON GIVING INSTEAD OF WINNING

DON'T get into conflicts over visitation schedules. Children look to their parents as the examples. The holidays are not the time to bring up bad feelings or make rude statements, even if you are goaded into reacting.

DO try to make positive statements to and about your ex-spouse. It will be a gift to your kids *even if they don't get it while they are young.* *Your children will recognize your qualities and respect*

you, as they get older. Here are some suggestions for now:

Plan ahead as far in advance as possible with your ex-spouse and your kids if you can.

Prioritize your wish list of activities, with the dates and times that work best for you.

Communicate what works best for you without being pushy.

Remain calm and respectful. Listen carefully to discover what your ex wants. You might be able to make tradeoffs.

Put the schedule in writing as soon as you reach an agreement, give your ex a copy to mutually keep track of the schedule and prevent misunderstandings.

Always have plan "B" Make an easy or simple alternative plan to replace activities that were scheduled in case of an emergency, such as an illness. You will have less stress because you are ready.

Head off conflicts by sticking to your agreement and being flexible with your plans if your ex asks you to, even at the last minute. *(Remember, "it is far better to give than to receive." Because when you give, it could come back to you in beautiful ways.)*

3. GIFT GIVING

DON'T compete for your child's love and loyalty or try to outdo each other by "buying your kids". *As the non-custodial parent you might feel that you need to make up for being the absent parent by indulging your child's whims.* This is not healthy parenting. You may eventually grow to resent it, and your child will likely test you and take advantage.

DO talk to your ex, if you can about your child's gift list and divide the items. Or if

you can, go in together for a bigger gift.

4. KIDS NEED TIME TO ADJUST TOO

DON'T react when your kids have difficulty going back and forth between two homes and/or when they emotionally over react to little things because of feelings of confusion and insecurity.

DO give your kids time to adjust and help them feel emotionally safe no matter what home they are in. Your kids will be comforted knowing that you understand. *One of the best gifts you can give your kids is permission to love both parents.* Your kids may be missing the other parent. Allow your child to communicate with the absent parent if they feel like they need to.

5. PARENTS NEED TO MAKE THE DECISIONS

DON'T give your kids too much power. Having kids choose to spend time with one parent over the other can cause your child to feel guilty. It also gives the child more power than is appropriate. *Divorced families often fall into the trap of giving the kids too much power.* (Your kids don't decide to stay home if they don't feel like going to school)

DO allow your kids to make age-appropriate decisions, like what they will wear. It helps kids feel more confident. *If a situation starts to feel out of balance try to have support, a close relative, counselor or pastor you can turn to for advice.*

6. STEPPARENT AND STEP SIBLINGS

DON'T force children to act happy if

they are not. However, you can request that your child spend a brief period of time with the family. *It may be helpful to stipulate certain requirements such as saying hello and being respectful.*

DO allow your kids to share how they feel. It is natural to experience some sadness around the holidays when we talk about the "old ways." *Take a few moments to acknowledge and help your child mourn the loss of their family the way it used to be.*

Keep expectations realistic.

7. KIDS AS PRISONERS OF WAR

DON'T hold your kids prisoner because of your emotional reactions or demands regarding your ex-spouse. Try to keep your kids from feeling like they are in the middle. Try to keep them from feeling that if they make mom happy dad will be sad or mad or the other way around. *If you do you will model that there is no such thing as a compromise, only victory or defeat.*

DO keep your eye on what is best for your children, freeing them from the obligation to keep track. Tell them that in the spirit of the season you will organize your time with them and their other parent according to what works best for them. Let them know that this will make you happy to see them happy.

You will be promoting the selfless spirit of the season for your kids if you do.

References: Paul B @Buzzle.com, Holly Aberly-Weistone & Donna Ferber, MA, CAC, Risa Garon, LCSW-C, BCD, CFLE, Claudia M. Lenart, Kim Hess, Alan Ravitz, M.D, MS

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