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Our Mission Statement

Promoting health and wholeness through professional counseling, consultation and education from a Christian perspective.

Continued from Page 2 "Bullying"

- teachers, need to somehow match this energy with quick, strong, and sustained effort on intervention. In the home setting, sometimes this means a combined effort of more than one adult. In the school setting it means an organized and systemic use of resources, which include the various roles within the educational system. Often parents and school systems give up too early or think they've changed inappropriate behavior before they actually do.
5. Schools have the ability and responsibility to judiciously and tenaciously "gang" up on the bully. The system has to observe the level of aggression and damage the bully or bullies exert on the victim or victims as they bring a commensurate amount of consequence to the situation.
6. The aggression, abuse, and damage that bullies perpetrate will usually escalate over time unless there is certain and comprehensive intervention.

7. Intervention must include both consequences and reeducation by appropriate authorities at home and school.
8. The child that bullies needs to accept responsibility for mistreating someone else. This means that the most important part of the consequence is that the bully needs to be made to say they are sorry to the victim. Unfortunately this concept is often overlooked by parents and school authority. By apologizing the bully is forced to acknowledge wrong. It also quickly restores more appropriate balance of power in the relationship. Repentance doesn't have to be sincere or heartfelt to begin the process of repairing damage and changing behavior.
9. After the child that bullies receives consequences, apologizes, and stops bullying the authorities need to give lots of positive attention, praise, and reward early and often. The key idea is for parents or school to put as much effort in rewarding the changed behavior as they did in identifying, stopping and punishing the bad behavior.

10. Victims of bullying need empathy and protection, together with regular effort to teach and encourage one how to not be victims. Often victims are enabled, and victimhood is allowed to continue. At some point it becomes the responsibility of the victim to not be a victim anymore.

I would like to conclude this article by way of a reminder of the profound responsibility we all have to live in relation to each other as God's image bearers, with the call to humbly seek and practice mercy and justice as Christ's servants in His world. ■



Doug Van Til is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with extensive experience in the school system. He enjoys working with children, adolescents, and adults in our Crete location.

In Part I of this article (Sep/Oct Pressing On), Doug proposed a Christian perspective and response to bullying attitude and behavior. All past newsletters/articles can be viewed on our website.
<http://www.chicagochristiancounseling.org/newsletters.html>

PRESSING ON...

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14



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Blended Families & Holidays

by Debi Mitchell, MS, LMFT

"And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace. And always be thankful." -Colossians 3:15 NLT

Blending families tends to be stressful no matter what time of year it is. When mixing a blended family with an already stressful season, it can cause parents to want to lie in the fetal position under a mound of covers until January rolls around! The reality of planning can cause most people anxiety and moments of panic. So how can you lower the stress? Here are two tips.

TIP 1: COMMUNICATE EARLY. Take some deep breaths and discuss these questions.

1. When are we celebrating?

Some families have a traditional time to get-together that is NOT on the actual holiday; other families are less flexible. For those homes where an ex-spouse also shares time with the children, scheduling becomes even more difficult. Also, try hard not to blame your spouse if his/her "ex" is making scheduling difficult.

2. Which families will we see?

How many families do you know that have two full Thanksgiving meals on the same day? Christmas tends to be even more difficult as the trips to both parents are scheduled around opening presents at home.

3. What were our traditions before we met?

There are as many traditions as there are families, but every family has at least one. Before the meal: give thanks one-by-one or someone special prays? Christmas Eve: candle-light vigil or last-minute shopping? Christmas Day: stay in pajamas and play with the toys or visit family? For Christmas, be sure and discuss expectations for gift-giving and the timing for opening gifts for each other and for the children.

4. Which traditions are important to keep?

Can't do without Mom's special stuffing recipe? Does the topper on the (real? artificial?) Christmas tree have to be an (angel? star?) It's important to know which traditions are LOVED and which are just...traditions.

5. What can we do new that will be "ours"?

"His" and "Hers" are fine for monogrammed towels, but a new family tradition can help the family to feel more like one family instead of two families who decided to live together.

TIP 2: FOCUS ON THE TRUE MEANINGS OF THANKSGIVING and CHRISTMAS. Here are a few ideas to help refocus:

- Invite someone without family nearby to Thanksgiving Dinner.

What Just Happened?! | Panic Attacks
 Bullying Part II: Prevention & Change
 Page 2

Christmas | Adding Some Spark & Sparkle
 New Staff
 Page 3



Debi Mitchell is a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist. She enjoys working with children, adolescents, and adults in our Schererville location.

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What Just Happened?!

| Panic Attacks

■ by Melinda Hammond, MA, LCPC



intensely stressful time for many people. Up to a third of the population will have a panic attack at some point in their life, and holiday stress can trigger an attack in some of those people.

God designed us to react to stress in order to keep us safe. When we're confronted with stress, our bodies go into "fight or flight" mode, releasing adrenaline into our bloodstreams. As this adrenaline is released, our heart rate speeds up, breathing becomes more shallow, and blood is pulled from our brain to our limbs in preparation for fighting or escape.

In our modern society, there are no saber toothed tigers to fight, or woolly mammoths to escape. Instead, our bodies respond to modern stresses (like planning a party, dealing with finances, or visiting family) with the same response. And instead of running or fighting, we're left wondering why our thinking is clouded, our heart is beating fast, and we can't breathe. This is a panic attack.

There's good news. First, our bodies have a limited amount of adrenaline, so this is not a permanent feeling! Furthermore, this shot of adrenaline can't kill you, make you go crazy, or cause a

heart attack. No one dies from panic! Finally, calming a panic attack is quite simple.

Take a moment to step out of the room. Take deep breaths, exhaling slowly. Get a drink of water. If you're still feeling anxious, step into a darkened room, and focus on relaxing each muscle in your body, one by one. You can also look up relaxation exercises on YouTube.com, and turn them on when anxiety starts.

If your panic attacks are becoming difficult to stop, reoccur often, keep you from the things you enjoy, or you find yourself worrying about having a panic attack, it's time to seek help. Your therapist will help you figure out your triggers, and the thoughts and feelings that accompany your panic attacks. He or she can also help you deal more effectively with stress this holiday season, and for the rest of your life. Have a safe and healthy Christmas! ■



Melinda Hammond is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and sees clients in our New Lenox and Orland Park locations.

Imagine that you're Christmas shopping, worried about how you're going to pay for these gifts. A family member calls, reminding you of the family Christmas party (of course, the same day as your work party!). A voice comes over the loudspeaker, "we are closing in 5 minutes!" Suddenly, your heart is pounding, your chest hurts, and you're dizzy. Your mind is going a mile a minute, and you fear you're going crazy. Then the nausea starts, and you begin to worry that you are having a heart attack. 10 minutes later, you're safe in your car and those feelings are gone. **What just happened?!**

It's likely that what you experienced was a panic attack. The holidays can be an

BULLYING

■ by Doug Van Til, MSW, Licensed Clinical Social Worker



Part II: Prevention & Change

In Part II of my thoughts on bullying, I will talk about some guidelines or premises regarding bullying, and follow with some suggestions for the prevention and remediation of the problem of bullying.

1. Even responsible and "mature" adults should remember that as human beings we're all capable of using our influence, power, and control, and thereby enter into some level of bullying - sometimes without even realizing it. It follows then that we, at times, could even inadvertently and unconsciously engage in bad modeling.
2. Maladaptive behaviors are often learned early in life. Parents need to look for tendencies and characteristics of bully and victim behavior even before the children are of school age. Obviously if emotional and or physical abuse occurs between father and mother and siblings, the proclivity of the child to develop patterns of bully or victims behavior is high.
3. Parents need to discern the difference between sibling rivalry and destructive imbalance and exertion of

power among their children. If parents become the experts on the developmental stage and the unique sensibilities of each child's personality, they will be more equipped to know when to intercede.

4. Children tend to bring lots of energy and tenacity to do either good or bad as they interact with each other. Therefore, those whose responsibility it is to intervene, namely parents and

Continued on Page 4 "Bullying"

Christmas

Adding Some Spark & Sparkle

■ by Dr. Janet Irvine, Clinical Psychologist



The holidays have come far from quietly and joyfully celebrating the birth of the child Jesus to becoming stressful and harried. After December 25th, it's all over. What a let-down!

As an alternative, try adding some spirit with many lovely, long-lost and Christ-centered ways to put Jesus--the real spark and sparkle--into the holidays.

During the four weeks before Christmas, celebrate Advent. Celebrate Christmastide through January 6th. There are lots of ideas on the internet!

- Make an advent wreath, and spend time in quiet prayer daily. Continue the time of quiet anticipation and put tree up only the week before Christmas. Elaborate on decorations as the days of Advent go by.
- On December 1, make a paper chain for each day in Advent. Write and practice a special act of kindness for each day.
- Check out making Jesse Tree ornaments, which trace the lineage of Jesus. Make Chrismons; these ornaments represent various symbols of Jesus.
- Get an Advent Calendar focused on the nativity story.
- Put up a stable. Put Jesus in the manger on Christmas Eve. Put the wise men in a room furthest away and move them daily, to arrive at the stable on January 6th, Epiphany Day.
- Observe St. Nicholas Day on Dec. 8th. He was a godly and generous man and the model for "Santa Claus."
- Give generously to the poor, the sick, the friendless and the needy.
- Celebrate "Christmastide" through January 6th, the arrival of the Magi (Epiphany Day). Make a King's Cake, keep up your tree and continue to celebrate the birth of Jesus.
- Sing and play Christmas Carols.

Light lots of candles, and as you hang your lights, remember that Jesus is the Light of the World. He will add the Spark and the Sparkle! ■



Janet Irvine enjoys working with children and families in our Orland Park location.

Online Resources:

Advent: <http://catholicism.about.com/od/holidaysandholidays/p/Advent.htm>

Christmastide: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmastide>

Advent Wreath: <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/re0132.html>

Jesse Tree: <http://www.domestic-church.com/CONTENT.DCC/19971201/FRIDGE/FRIDGE1.HTM>

Jesse Tree YouTube Video: http://youtu.be/6-a6b6Ac_2s

Chrismons: <http://www.whychristmas.com/customs/chrismons.shtml>

Advent Calendar: <http://littleblots.com/BibleCraftsAdventCalendar.html>

Epiphany: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epiphany_\(holiday\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epiphany_(holiday))

St. Nicholas: <http://www.stnicholascenter.org>

New staff...



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Lori is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor who works with children, adolescents, and adults. Her goal is to assist clients in enjoying healthy, abundant lives by overcoming obstacles and aligning thoughts with truth. Her experience includes ACOA, ADD/ADHD, Adolescent Issues, Adoption Issues, Anger Management, Anxiety, Autism, Bipolar, Career Counseling, Conflict Resolution, Depression, Divorce Issues, Eating Disorders, Grief/Loss, Learning Disabilities, Marital/Couples/Pre-marital, OCD, Parenting Skills, Phobias, Post Abortion Counseling, Play Therapy, Process Additions, Self Harm, Substance Abuse, Victims of Abuse, Assault, Trauma, Violence (PTSD).

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Susan is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who works with children, adolescents and adults. Her goal is to empower clients through the exploration of personal influences, the creation of new methods and strategies to address life's dilemmas, and the strengthening of internal resources. Her experience includes ACOA, ADD/ADHD, Adolescent Issues, Adoption Issues, Anger Management, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Anxiety, Bipolar, Career Counseling, Conflict Resolution, Depression, Grief/Loss, Learning Disabilities, Life Coaching, Marital/Couples/Pre-marital, OCD, Parenting Skills, Phobias, Post Abortion Counseling, Play Therapy, Victims of Abuse, Assault, Trauma, Violence (PTSD).

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