



# Valley Center Counseling

## *Life Transitions Newsletter: Fall 2009*



*Dear Clients,  
My Life Transitions  
Newsletter has made an  
important change – we are no  
longer publishing monthly –  
we have changed to quarterly  
publications: Fall, Winter,  
Spring and Summer. Let us  
know what you think about  
this new schedule.*

*Fall has arrived with carefree summer days being replaced with busy back to school schedules and preparing for the holidays. Our feature article focuses on how to have full and happy holidays on a limited budget. Also, check out our shorts – some very interesting information.*

*It is our hope that your holidays are filled with love and peace and not STRESS.*

*Many blessings,*

*Penny Blazej, LCSW, BCD  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker*

### *Feature Article: How do you prepare for the holidays on a tight budget?*

Planning is the key to having rich holidays without spending a lot of money. One of the positive things to come from this recession are ideas on how to have great fun on a limited budget. It truly is amazing how much you can cut out of a budget without decreasing your quality of life. With the holidays right around the corner it is even more important for us to plan our events in order to stay within our budgets. Below are a few ideas that can help:

1. **Gift giving** – One cost effective solution is to have everyone make a gift from things they find in their own home. You will be surprized at how creative people can get. Another money saver is to have everyone put a name into a hat and randomly draw the person you are to buy for instead of giving gifts to everyone. That way you can focus on just one
2. **Parties** – Focus on the purpose of holiday parties - it is to gather people to celebrate and socialize. Here are some cost cutting ideas: instead of having the party catered why not have a pot luck with a theme like Mexican or Italian and have people bring their best dishes; and if your guests want alcoholic drinks have them bring their libation of choice. That way the burden is not on one person but spread across everyone who is attending. The hostess or host only has to provide a festive setting, plates etc... and non alcoholic drinks. This will certainly cut stress and cost!
3. **Travel** – books flights way in advance and use frequent flyer miles. You may want to have the whole family donate miles so everyone can come – the cost travel burden is then spread across all family members, not just the ones traveling. If travel is not possible arrange for a visit via a video phone call using a videocam connected to a PC. The units cost about \$50-75 and work over any high speed internet connection. Almost free to operate.  
Or send your love ones a home video as their holiday gift – you can share your home and yearly events with those far away. And think what a great family project this would be – so much fun!
4. **House decorating** – this can really be costly if we are not careful. Why not throw a decorating party where you make homemade decorations – like stringing popcorn and cranberries – kids love to do this and truth be told, so do adults. Consult the internet for cost effective ideas. If family/friends live close by, you

can feature a project at each persons home – going from home to home making great decorations and spending time with loved ones.

5. **Help those in need** – this can be the best gift of all – visiting someone who is lonely without family near; help serve a holiday meal to the homeless; sing carols at nursing homes. I'm sure you can come up with some great things to do – and do it as a family. What a great lesson we can teach our children.

Remember, keep the holidays focused on their true meaning whether you are celebrating Thanksgiving, Christmas or Hanaka. It is about spending time with our loved ones – it is not about spending money.

### *Shorts*

#### **SCAM FOCUSED ON THE ELDERLY:**

My friend's mother was almost was a victim of a phone scam called the "Canadian grandparent scam." A young woman called her crying convinced her that she was her granddaughter, and said she was in jail after a car accident in Canada. The Mom actually wired the money, but by an incredible stroke of luck her granddaughter, who was happily at home in Rocklin, happened to call her an hour later. They were able to cancel the wire before the money was picked up. The police said that almost never happens! These people are very skilled, and they call at random until they reach someone they think is the right age to have grandchildren in their early 20s. People should always have a question and answer that they and the grandchild should agree on beforehand, so they can verify the identity of the person. And, of course, they should never give out any information to the caller, and always verify by calling another relative or the child's parents. It's amazing what goes on out there.

#### **TWO vs. FOUR YEAR COLLEGE**

The National Center for Education Statistics states that 46% of US undergrads go to two-year schools. What is interesting is that in 2006 four-year schools were receiving \$20.4B in federal aid whereas the two-year colleges were receiving only \$1.9B. Big gap there! The average cost of a four-year education was \$6,197 in 2007, an average of \$1,550 per year. Two-year colleges were about the same

coming in at \$1,255 per year. So do you send you kids to a two year or a four year college? According to 2007 statistics the costs are about the same however, only 31% of the two-college students go on to graduate from a four-year college – that compares to the 50% graduation percentage of the four-year college. From this data it would appear that you would have a significantly higher change of getting your child a four-year college degree if you send them directly to a four-year school and the cost is almost the same! (From the July 20, 2009 TIME magazine page 50.)

#### **IP AS THE NEXT BIG ADDICTION:**

Over \$57 Billion of internet pornography (IP) revenue is generated every year - an over 500% increase from 2005! You can see why many psychologists are calling this the next addiction problem. What to do if your spouse is turning to the internet for sex instead of you? Get him. /her into therapy – this is really an addiction that can destroy intimacy between partners. The sooner the better.

#### **THE COST OF SLEEP PROBLEMS:**

The July/August 2009 edition of WebMD had an excellent article reviewing sleep problems and their solutions. They cited high cost for the loss of sleep, including: 100,000 sleep-related vehicle crashes each year in the US resulting in 1,500 deaths; Weight gain -- with women with sleep problems gaining an average of 33 pounds; and health complications --because the lack of sleep can raise the risk of blood pressure, diabetes, depression, heart attack and stroke. If you have a sleep problem it is imperative that you find healthy solutions.

#### **NEW WAY TO TREAT SCHIZOPHRENIA:**

Heart unfriendly antipsychotic drug or Vitamin-B-3? About 75 percent of the nearly 2.5 million schizophrenia patients in the U.S. change their medication every 18 months. These drugs have high risks like affecting heart rhythm parameters. Even with the risks there is a tremendous pool of patients who are dissatisfied with their current treatments and willing to try the next drug. Are there other ways to treat this difficult disease? There may be. Dr. Abram Hoffer has established a link between B-3 and schizophrenia. He treated one woman who was permanently institutional by severe schizophrenia with Vitamin B-3. She ended up graduating law school and passing the bar! Dr. Hoffer's book "Vitamin B-3 and

Schizophrenia: Discovery, Recovery, Controversy" can be found on amazon.com.

#### **SAFETY OF NEW QUIT SMOKING DRUGS:**

A short time ago, the FDA ordered that the smoking-cessation drugs varenicline (Pfizer's Chantix) and bupropion (GlaxoSmithKline's Zyban) must carry "black box" warnings that use of these drugs has been associated with serious mental health events. Including suicidal behavior in patients with no history of psychiatric illness. Other symptoms include changes in behavior, hostility, agitation, and depressed mood. If you start feeling any of these symptoms, the FDA recommends you tell your doctor immediately. A black box warning is the highest FDA warning – you might want to think twice about these drugs. Remember, hypnosis has an excellent success rate for smoke cessation.

#### **A NEW DRUG FOR ADHD:**

**Intuniv** – a new and different once-daily ADHD drug – just got approved by the FDA for use in children as young as 6. This drug is being marketed as the 'kinder, gentler' ADHD drug because it's not a controlled substance and it's not addictive. However, there are risks involved and these need to be discussed with your MD before starting the drug. First, more studies need to be done. The drug was tested in only 8 and 9-week trials and the two long-term safety trials lasted an average of 10 months. Therefore, there is little data on the long term use of this new drug. Secondly, even at the lowest possible dose there are significant side effects like: abdominal pains, sedation, dizziness, dry mouth, constipation, hypotension (very low blood pressure), loss of appetite, sedation, and somnolence (extreme sleepiness), bradycardia (dangerously slow heart rate) and syncope (fainting). Net: More studies need to be preformed to have a better understanding of the long term use of Intuniv.

#### **809 AREA CODE PHONE SCAM:**

We received a call last week from the 809 area code. The woman said 'Hey, this is Karen. Sorry I missed you --get back to us quickly. I have something important to tell you.' Then she repeated a phone number beginning with 809. We didn't respond. Then this week, we received the following e-mail:

**Do Not DIAL AREA CODE 809, 284, and 876.....**

The 809 area code is located in the Dominican Republic [some of the others codes

are also in the Caribbean] and the call will be billed as an international call and is very expensive. Reversing the charges afterward can become a real nightmare because you did actually make the call. If you complain, both your local phone company and your long distance carrier will not want to get involved and will most likely tell you that they are simply providing the billing for the foreign company. You'll end up dealing with a foreign company that argues they have done nothing wrong.

The scam works because of the way they try to get you to call. They tell you that it is information about a family member who has been ill or to tell you someone has been arrested, died, or to let you know you have won a wonderful prize, etc. In each case, you are told to call the 809 number right away. Since there are so many new area codes these days, many people unknowingly return these calls. You could be charged **\$25 per-minute**. You may also get a long recorded message to keep you on the phone as long as possible to increase the charges.

### *Book Reviews*

**"Depression Is Contagious"** by Michael D. Yapko, Ph.D. just came out a few weeks ago. Dr. Yapko is a world known expert on depression. This book looks at the root causes of depression – it is about our relationships. Michael does not buy into the prevailing line that depression is a brain disease caused by malfunctioning neurons and chemicals. His perspective is that depression occurs when our social worlds are not working. It is an easy read and has many good points. As most of you know, I believe depression has three causes: genetic predisposition, primary relationship and our social environment. All three work together. Michael gives a good view of how our social environment can cause depression.

**"Three Cups of Tea"** by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, - this book is well written and shows how one person can really make a difference in our world. It also gives an excellent view of Afghanistan culture.

**"The Body Broken"** by Lynne Greenberg – this is a must read for anyone who is trying to adjust to a chronic illness. This book is very well written and a pleasure to read. It is

about a journey a woman takes in adapting to having chronic pain while still having a productive and full life. This book certainly instills life.

You can order these books directly from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### *Wise Words*

I passed a church sign the other day that said:

#### **LONG BEFORE EMAIL**

#### **GOD ANSWERED KNEEMAIL**

Good friends are like stars.....  
You don't always see them,  
But you know they are always there.

“Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself, in your way of thinking.”  
By Marcus Aurelius Antonius A.D. 121-180

### *Announcements*

**Subject:** House Resolution 615

Congressman John Fleming (Louisiana physician) has proposed an amendment that would require congressmen and senators to take the same healthcare plan as all other United States Citizens, like Medicare and any health care legislation that is passed in the future. Currently, they have their own very rich Federal program. Congressman Fleming is encouraging people to go on his Website and sign his petition (very simple - just first, last and email).

<http://fleming.house.gov/index.html>

### *Breathing Space*



**Azure Bay in Yellowstone**

### *Just for Laughs*

Dear Tech Support,

Last year I upgraded from Boyfriend 5.0 to Husband 1.0 and noticed a distinct slow down in overall system performance, particularly in the flower and jewelry applications, which operated flawlessly under Boyfriend 5.0. In addition, Husband 1.0 uninstalled many other valuable programs, such as Romance 9.5 and Personal Attention 6.5, and then installed undesirable programs such as: NBA 5.0, NFL 3.0 and Golf Clubs 4.1 Conversation 8.0 no longer run, and Housecleaning 2.6 simply crashes the system.

Please note that I have tried running Nagging 5.3 to fix these problems, but to no avail.

What can I do?

Signed,  
Desperate.

DEAR DESPERATE,

First, keep in mind, Boyfriend 5.0 is an Entertainment Package, while Husband 1.0 is an operating system.

Please enter command: ithoughtyoulovedme.html and try to download Tears 6.2 and do not forget to install the Guilt 3.0 update.

If that application works as designed, Husband 1.0 should then automatically run the applications Jewelry 2.0 and Flowers 3.5.

However, remember that overuse of the above application can cause Husband 1.0 to default to Grumpy Silence 2.5, Happy Hour 7.0 or Beer 6.1

Please note that Beer 6.1 is a very bad program that will download the Farting and Snoring Loudly Beta.

Whatever you do, DO NOT under any circumstances install Mother-In-Law 1.0 (it runs a virus in the background that will eventually seize control of all your system resources).

In addition, please do not attempt to reinstall the Boyfriend 5.0. These are unsupported applications and will crash Husband 1.0.

In summary, Husband 1.0 is a great program, but it does have limited memory and cannot learn new applications quickly. You might consider buying additional software to improve memory and performance. We recommend: Cooking 3.0 and Hot Lingerie 7.7

Good Luck Babe!  
Tech Support

**Remember – laughter is the best medicine!!!!**