

Ask Your Therapist

By Krishnabai, MSW, LICSW, the Ashby Center for Counseling

### **New Year's Resolutions (and) Further Thoughts on Surviving the Holidays**

*Please note: the column on getting your partner to accompany you to couple's therapy will appear next month.*

I received several requests from readers to address another issue concerning the holidays, that of loneliness. It is a paradox that, in the midst of so much activity and people contact, it is often the time when people feel the most lonely and disconnected from one another. It has to do with all the images of loving connection that we are bathed in during the holidays, and yet so many people's lives and relationships do not mirror those images. The conflicts do not go away during December, the alcoholics do not get miraculously sober, the selfish do not become generous, and isolated people do not suddenly have relationships. It can be very painful to be alone during a time that is so focused on family. It can be especially painful if you are with people and still feel alone.

So if you are without meaningful friends and family this year, here are 2 thoughts. First, accept your circumstances and be kind to yourself. Make yourself a nice meal and distract yourself with hobbies, pets or media or go outside for a while. Naps are nice, too. Secondly, volunteer your time to help others who have greater needs than you do. Animal shelters, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, nursing homes are all in need of friendly visitors. Helping others can really change your perspective and raise your spirits all year long, not just during the holidays.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS need to be made with the cold eye of realism, not idealism. Figure out what you can truly do, not what you would like to do. Try to lose 20 pounds, not 50. If you succeed, there is no reason not to keep going towards 30, 40 and 50. But set yourself up to lose 50 and you will be in the same situation next year! If you want to stop smoking, put together a support team of people who can help you for the long run, not just through the grumpy jitters. Think about how you are going to handle differently the situations where you normally reach for a smoke. Reward yourself for saving all that money by planning to buy something or do something you have wanted and not been able to afford. Consider acupuncture or hypnosis to help you with the craving.

Above all else, forgive yourself. We are all so very human!

Krishnabai, MSW is a therapist in Ashby and Wellesley Hills where she sees adults, older teens and couples. The core of her work is the discovery and expression of the authentic Self. She focuses on the identification, expression, and resolution of emotions, commitment to honesty and the use of remedial education and information.

The Ashby Center for Counseling 978-386-5657