



Relationships *The Adlerian Team*

Bring Comfort and Joy into Your New Year

By Susan Prosser

The holiday season is behind us now as we settle into the darkness of winter and a new year filled with possibility. Did you make it through all the hustle and bustle with your comfort and joy intact? Why not make a resolution to yourself to make 2009 a year of comfort and joy?

The ingredients for comfort and joy are simple – maybe not always easy to choose, but very simple when we do. The ingredients are: meaningful time with self and meaningful time with others. Our fundamental needs are to be connected to others with loving energy and to know that our lives have meaning and purpose and that we are making a difference. As we work towards these goals we find an increased sense of well-being.

Busy Lives Rob Us of Meaning

Our busyness can keep us spinning to the point where we actually begin believing that our to-do lists are the most important priority of our lives. We tell ourselves that once our list is complete that we can relax and enjoy ourselves. The problem is our list is never complete.

We rattle around in our heads with our negative messages and self recriminations, getting more and more worried that we can't keep up with things. The fears and worries get our full attention and we can even lose sleep over the things that take on such importance. Our hearts need to be activated in order to manage stress and create relief. Scientists are now telling us that our hearts have as much or more intelligence than our brains. Our hearts will guide us towards meaningful connections and activities.

Heart Energy

We all like to know we are wanted, valued and enjoyed. Children love it when they know we enjoy their presence and want to spend time with them. One of the glorious things about falling in love is the anticipation of being in the presence of our lover. Allowing ourselves to stop and enjoy our children, partners, friends and family helps us to slow down and experience what is truly important and meaningful.

It helps to recognize the difference in ourselves when we are living with the worries and fears of our heads as opposed to the comfort of heart-to-heart connections. Ideally we want our hearts and heads to be working cooperatively together, but for that to happen we need to make choices that will help us to slow down.

Slowing down is a challenge for me and it can actually feel uncomfortable especially when my head believes that everything is urgent. But the discomfort is replaced by relief when I allow it to happen. There is relief in knowing that I can give myself permission to stop and live the moments of my life in a meaningful way. There is relief in rest. Sometimes I take my hand and push it down from my head to my heart in an attempt to put my focus on

my heart and remind myself that there is so much more to my life than the things on my list.

Precious Time in Connection with Self and Others

Time races by and many of us feel we are in a race against it. Eckhart Tolle has written many helpful books on how to live in the present moment. Living this way helps us to make peace with time and relieve stress. Planning and lists keep us in our heads and in the future. This is where the race begins and the stress heightens. Take a moment to breathe, count your blessings, trust that the important things will get done in their own time, push your awareness down into your heart and be grateful for the seemingly small things of life.

Human touch is profoundly important for our optimal functioning. Extreme comfort can be experienced as the result of a hug, hand-holding, a back rub, a foot rub or a cuddle. Benefits can be gained from just moments of touch. A thirty-second hug can bring down the heart rate and restore a sense of balance in adults and in children. In fact, you can hug yourself! Just wrap your arms around yourself and say something kind and loving to the wonderful human you are!

Bring comfort and joy to yourself and others

- ✓ Decide to continue activities that are meaningful and fun and to discard the ones that are expensive in terms of time, money and energy.
- ✓ Choose activities for yourself that either give energy or at the least do not drain you. When something is draining, stop, take a break and ask yourself if the activity is really all that important. Truly challenge yourself because what seems important may not be. In fact, if you are feeling drained it is likely your body telling you to stop and take note.
- ✓ Play! Find things to do that make you laugh and feel good. Everyone in your presence will benefit
- ✓ Smile! When you find yourself feeling tense or down, simply smile. The action of your face sends messages to your brain that all is well and you will have a moment's relief from the stress. Keep it up and the benefits continue. You may even like it!
- ✓ Make eye contact! Eye contact intensifies interactions with others. It doesn't have to be long and drawn out to have results. Your children will hear you better, your spouse will pay more attention and even the clerk in the store will gain something from your efforts.

- ✓ Touch often! As stated above, human touch can restore one's balance and comfort instantly
- ✓ Don't listen to the negativity in your head. Imagine you are your own kind parent or best friend and you are speaking to yourself in a comforting way. This activity actually increases the serotonin in your brain – an instant pick-me-up!
- ✓ Sing, dance and celebrate! The greatest gift we can give to our loved ones is to be happy. Your happiness is contagious and your family and friends will be so grateful!

I wish you and your loved ones a constant source of comfort and joy in your lives over this New Year and well beyond!

Susan offers counselling to individuals, families, and couples, and conducts workshops and courses on parenting, relationship issues, self esteem and communication at the Adlerian Counselling and Consulting Group, Inc. The holistic approach of the Centre is congruent with Susan's approach to working with people.

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