

# CONNECTING

Healthy Information from the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center  November/December 2007

## Healing Your Spirit, Mind, and Body

No person lives a life free of pain, loss, and disappointment. We have each experienced the end of a friendship or intimate relationship, the death of a loved one, or a physical illness. Whenever we experience loss, we yearn for healing. Our attempt to heal from loss and brokenness is a lifelong process of growth and development. We search for a sense of well-being and comfort. This article, while it may not provide a simple answer to questions of healing, provides some useful thoughts on the process of healing.

### Elements of Healing

In order to heal from past losses, we must identify our specific losses, disappointments, and hurts. Only when we have honestly acknowledged these occurrences can we begin the process of accepting that losses have occurred and that these losses will be a part of our inner working. When we begin to grieve these losses, we are able to more fully live in the present and continue healing.



It is helpful to the healing process to be attentive to our bodies. This includes eating well, being physically active, and getting enough rest. When our bodies feel good, our spirits feel better. It is also important to focus on doing things that comfort and soothe us. These types of activities vary from person to person but can include listening to music, taking walks in nature, or soaking in a hot bath.

Surrounding ourselves with positive people is also helpful in the healing process. When we seek out friends and family members who believe in us, accept us, and care for us, it is easier to heal from losses. Having this supportive network helps us feel loved and increases our self-esteem. As much as possible, we need to minimize the presence of negative, critical people in our day-to-day living.

Reading stimulating material can be a key part of the healing process. Inspirational or devotional books and books about how other people take care of themselves help us generate ideas about ways we can attend to our healing needs. There are many such books, but two I suggest are *Peace Is Every Step* by Thich Nhat Hanh and *Illuminated Prayers* by Marianne Williamson.

Taking time to be quiet and reflective is difficult for many people, but essential in the healing process. The demands of our lives can prevent us from sitting in solitude. Our current culture fosters busyness and overactivity, and this inhibits our ability to slow down. However, slowing down and “being with ourselves” is important to being in touch with our spiritual side, which in turn aids healing. Many people find that prayer and a relationship with community, church, higher power, and/or God promotes strength, connectedness, tranquility and a sense of well-being.

A part of healing is seeing the positive in things more than the negative aspects. In order to do this, it is helpful to develop a “grateful heart.” When we have gratitude in our hearts for the little things (a beautiful maple tree changing from green to brilliant red or the smile on a child’s face), it is difficult to dwell on the negative things. It is helpful to our healing and well-being to open our eyes and ears and heart to everything wonderful around us. Having a grateful heart changes our attitude. When we are grateful, it impacts our mind, body, and spirit.

In addition to having a grateful heart, it is important to be mindful. Mindfulness, a Buddhist concept, means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. Jon Kabat-Zinn believes that our lives unfold only in moments. Mindfulness is a way to take charge of the direction and quality of our

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own lives in each of those moments. This kind of personal attentiveness to our hearts and souls can strengthen our self-concept, which fosters healing.

### Overcoming Barriers to Healing

The most difficult barriers to healing are anxiety, a desire for perfection, and the feeling of being overwhelmed. Anxiety holds us back and makes us feel “stuck.” Sometimes we cannot move forward in the healing process, because we are anxious or fearful. For example, we may be anxious that we will fail or look foolish in the eyes of another. Overcoming anxiety is a complicated process that is unique to each particular anxiety. In lessening our anxieties, it is important to be in a safe environment with understanding people who will walk with us as we face and deal with these anxieties.

Because we live in an imperfect world, it is difficult to heal or feel whole when we want our lives to be perfect. Until we accept that our lives are not going to be perfect, we will have unrealistic expectations and unduly stress ourselves. This burden of stress makes healing more difficult. To live a peaceful life, it is important to be flexible in an ever-changing, imperfect world.

Many people are fatigued and overwhelmed. These feelings get in the way of healing. Taking breaks or mini-vacations from our fast-paced lives helps. It is important to carve out time to rejuvenate, relax, and refocus. Spending a half hour walking around Gray's Lake before heading home from work or listening to inspirational music over the noon hour can facilitate a peaceful, mindful attitude. This peaceful, mindful attitude is central to healing.

As we consider the healing process, it is useful to remember this statement by Thich Nhat Hanh, “Every morning, when we wake up, we have 24 brand-new hours to live. What a precious gift! We have the capacity to live in a way that these 24 hours will bring peace, joy, and happiness to ourselves and others.” Our every action or inaction influences the person each of us is now and is becoming. The foods we eat, the movements made by our bodies, the thoughts we entertain are all part of our holistic behavior. By involving our spirit, mind, and body, we can heal from past loss, disappointment, and pain.

*Eileen Burtle, M.A., L.M.S.W., L.M.H.C.*

## C.O.O.L. Corner

Children Overcoming the Obstacles of Life



### Helping Children in Times of Grief and Loss



-  We can accompany children, giving them safety and security, as they cope with loss.
-  Children can handle truth, more than they can handle being deceived. Keeping them “in the dark” is a kind of humiliation.
-  Given the chance to talk, feel, play and participate, children can almost always deal with loss without it overwhelming them.
-  Children can only grieve at their developmental level. It is likely that they will grieve an experience again at later developmental stages. At each stage, assimilation of the experience at a newer level of awareness is important.
-  Communicate simply ~ use the child's vocabulary.
-  Communicate directly ~ be in the child's line of sight and at eye level.
-  Communicate directly ~ tell the child what you feel and reflect the feeling you see in the child.
-  Take utmost care of the basics ~ healthy eating, sleeping, and exercise for the child.

*Eileen Burtle, Consultant to Churches and Coordinator of Preventive Mental Health Programming at the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center, is a pastoral psychotherapist and licensed mental health counselor. She holds a master of arts degree in human development from St. Mary's University and received clinical training at The Menninger Foundation. Eileen is an associate member of the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters. She is a fellow in the American Association of Pastoral Counselors and a clinical member of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. Eileen provides both marriage counseling and counseling for individuals. She has a special interest in helping clients adjust to grief and loss and heal from abuse and trauma, as well as guiding clients as they plan the second half of their lives.*

### Suggested Reading

- Billington, Dottie. *Life is an Attitude: How to Grow Forever Better*. Sammamish, WA: Lowell Leigh Books, 2001.
- Hanh, Thich Nhat. *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*. NY: Bantam Books, 1992.
- Kabat-Zinn, Jon. *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*. NY: Hyperion, 1994.
- Salzberg, Sharon. *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*. Boston: Shambhala, 1997.
- Williamson, Marianne. *Illuminated Prayers*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 1997.

## UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT PERSONALITY STYLES

Dates:	January 4, 2008 – March 7, 2008
Time:	Fridays, 8:15 - 9:45 a.m. for ten weeks
Location:	Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center 2929 Westown Parkway, Suite 110, West Des Moines
Cost:	\$200 plus optional texts
CEUs:	<i>This course provides 15.00 hours towards the continuing education requirements of the Iowa Board of Social Work Examiners and the Iowa Board of Behavioral Science Examiners.</i>
Registration Deadline:	December 14, 2007 <i>To register, call (515) 274-4006 or e-mail info@dmpcc.org.</i>
Instructor:	Curtis Rich, M.S.W., L.I.S.W.

This course offers an introduction to a psychodynamic developmental perspective on understanding and working therapeutically with common personality and character styles (disorders). Two class periods will be spent on each disorder, with a focus as follows.

Week 1: Symptomatic presentation, developmental theory, ego structure, defenses

Week 2: Psychotherapy process

Readings, lecture presentations, and discussions will provide the format for the course. Case material from the instructor and participants will be used.

The Instructor: Curtis Rich, M.S.W.

*Curt is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. He received his B.A. in Sociology from Central College, Pella, IA, and his M.S.W. from the University of Iowa.*

*He is a Diplomate in the American Psychotherapy Association. His clinical interests include issues related to personality disorders, unresolved grief, and attachment concerns. Prior teaching and publications have focused on specific treatment issues related to evolving personality disorders in adolescence. His current clinical responsibilities at Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center involve addressing the clinical concerns primarily in the adult population.*



## WOMEN HELPING WOMEN

Luncheon

*Save this date:*

**Friday March 14, 2008**

**Guest Speaker will be Peggy Northrop,  
Editor in Chief of More magazine!**



## GIVING IS GOOD FOR YOU

The months of November and December are filled with traditions for many people. One familiar tradition is the end-of-year gift to a favorite nonprofit organization. Did you realize that giving is actually good for you? A handful of researchers have identified that there are physical, emotional and spiritual benefits associated with giving.

### Physical benefits

- Greater longevity
- Significant reduction in toxic stress chemicals in the body
- Enhanced functioning of the immune system
- Healthier sleep

### Emotional benefits

- Increased self-acceptance
- Reduced self-absorption and sense of isolation
- Enhanced compassion, empathy, and sensitivity to others
- Increased endorphin release

### Spiritual benefits

- Greater connection to the God of your understanding
- Stronger involvement in charitable activity
- Sustained peace of mind
- Greater clarity about the meaning and purpose of life

We invite you to include the Center in your end-of-year giving. We trust giving to the Center will bring some/all of the above benefits to your life. Rest assured your gift brings peace of mind to the many Center clients whose lives are changed through the healing they find in their counseling at the Center.

*The benefits listed are from More Give to Live,  
by Douglas Lawson, Alti Publishing.*



**Men and Their Fathers**

**Saturday, January 26, 2008**

9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

Fee \$50—includes lunch

Call 274-4006 to register

## The IRA Charitable Rollover Provision

For the tax year 2007, the Pension Protection Act allows individuals 70½ or older to donate up to \$100,000 from their IRAs **tax free** to a charitable organization. Since people older than 70½ are required to take minimum distributions from their IRAs, they could rollover their minimum distribution to the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center without having to count it as income and pay taxes on it. Or if you have IRA funds that you know you will not need in retirement, this year presents an excellent opportunity to be generous while forgoing the taxes on an IRA distribution. Do check with your tax advisor and then think about a charitable gift to the Center from your IRA in 2007.

## Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center FOUNDATION

One very prudent tax advantage would be to name the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center FOUNDATION as beneficiary for all or part of your IRA assets. Leaving all or part of your IRA funds to the Foundation would put your money to work bringing hope and healing to the less fortunate, and the amount of that gift would not be diminished by estate or income taxes. Your tax adviser or financial planner can help you with this.

### Let Us Hear from You!

- ~ If you would like your name removed from our mailing list, please contact the Center.
- ~ If you would prefer to receive your newsletter by e-mail, please contact the Center.
- ~ If you have comments or suggestions about the newsletter, please direct these to Kathleen Murrin at the Center, (515) 274-4006, info@dmpcc.org, or 2929 Westown Pkwy., Ste. 110, West Des Moines, IA 50266.

[www.dmpcc.org](http://www.dmpcc.org)

Visit the Center's website for more information on the Center's counseling services and staff, special events and classes.

## CONNECTING

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