



December 2008

What's on Your List for the Holidays?

By M. Linda Bell

Another year will soon have passed. Even though we are still enjoying the special feelings of Autumn, preparation for the coming holiday season has already begun for many people. The season that is intended to be full of joy and expectations can be a season of stress and discord for individuals and families struggling with the consequences of an addiction. For those who are living a renewed life in recovery, the season can be clouded by anxiety and a fear of relapse.

The following article was written by Bellwood's President, Linda Bell, and originally published in Moods Magazine as "Left-Overs from the Holiday Season". The purpose of the article was to help people reflect on the events of their holiday season and provide encouragement and guidance as they moved into a new year. Whether or not you are struggling with an addiction, we believe that this article can offer important tips and suggestions to help you experience and enjoy a memorable holiday season.

As the holiday season approaches, what thoughts go through your mind? What feelings tingle in your heart? What was it like last year? Do you plan for it to be different this year? Is this a time for spiritual or personal reflection? Are you able to get into the spirit of things and have fun with the lights on the trees, the holiday music on the radio, buying and wrapping gifts? How do you plan ahead to ensure that you feel balance among the commercialism, the fun and the spirit of peace and goodwill. Many people scurry around, experiencing a little anxiety or tension but still enjoying the festivities and the heightened energy.

While the holidays can be stressful, they are usually manageable for most of us. For others, the holiday season is dreaded. With a little planning, you can make the best out of a difficult season.

Getting together with friends and family



may be something we look forward to, or an obligation that needs to be fulfilled. We often think of the holidays as a time for children - a magical time. However, children are also noisy, very active and you may find yourself losing patience.

The holidays can conjure up bad memories. Even when personal experiences have changed, the anxiety associated with the past can flood into the present and taint it. Being prepared, knowing your limitations, and planning can keep things manageable.

For the addict in recovery, the holidays can be difficult and a time when there is a risk for relapse. If you are not with your family, this is a time of year when you may miss them more. You may feel lonely even when you are with others. Going back to the basics in recovery is a good way to cope. Attend extra 12-step or support meetings. Stay involved with recovery activities. Host an event for friends who are also in recovery. Stay in touch with your sponsor and your counsellor if you have one. If you do not have one, get one. Take a few minutes every day for reflection. Use one of those little books that have a daily inspiration. Write a few lines in a diary and work on developing "an attitude of gratitude".

One of the options for someone recovering from an alcohol problem is to speak to your doctor about using the protective drug, *Antabuse*. It is not addicting; it only reacts when you drink alcohol. It will make you physically sick. Why would anyone take this stuff, you might ask? When your mind is preoccupied with the idea of drinking all day and night, it is difficult to focus on anything else. Instead of having to make hundreds of decisions during the day not to drink, you make one decision - *I am taking Antabuse today*. Most people are not interested in testing the reaction. It is like having an insurance policy. It protects you against the impulsive first drink that can lead to disaster. It buys you time to consider your options. It buys you time to let the problem, the stress, or the anxiety to pass. It's a good tool early in recovery and for times when you are feeling stressed or vulnerable.

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If alcohol is not a problem for you, you still need to be cautious. For many drug addicts, the risk of relapse to their main drug is through beer or alcohol.

There are also new medications available that help reduce cravings. Ask your doctor if there is something suitable for you. However, medications do not change your lifestyle, so be vigilante in your recovery.

Parties and events will continue into January and pop up during the year. Plan for the event. Will there be alcohol or drugs? Is the venue a safe place; a place where you will not be triggered? Who will you go with? Try not to go alone. You can plan to arrive late and to leave early. Have a secret signal that lets the other person know that you are feeling uncomfortable and would like to leave.

Eating breakfast, lunch and dinner plus a mid-morning, mid-afternoon and evening snack helps your blood sugar level not to drop. Mood swings and cravings are reduced when you eat regularly and include protein, carbohydrates and a little fat in your diet.

A good brisk walk is a simple way to get some exercise and also help you to cope better with stress. Watch your coffee intake. Coffee is a stimulant. It can make some people agitated and interfere with sleep. Speaking of sleep, make sure you get enough. When you are over-tired, you do not cope as well with stress.

Remember **'HALT'** – don't get **Hungry, Angry, Lonely** or **Tired!**

Tips for problem gamblers

If you are recovering from a gambling problem, there are additional challenges. This is the shopping season and the time of big sales. There are a lot of deals and it is tempting to over-spend. A big debt is a

trigger for relapse. It's dangerous because it can easily lead to thinking of ways to make quick money. Stay focused on your budget. Keep your receipts and be accountable. Controlling finances and making restitution payments are a major part of recovery from a gambling problem. If you need help staying on track, get your partner or a family member involved.



When spending time with family and friends, be careful about having a few drinks. Remember, drinking lowers inhibitions. What do you do when you get together? Do you play cards? Make sure you have a safety plan around entertainment.

Control your car so that you are not dependent on someone else for transportation. Have enough money for a taxi. Be prepared to leave some functions in order to protect yourself.

Hopefully, families and friends will be sensitive to your recovery and not give you

lottery tickets. However, if you receive one, plan what you will do with it.

If you successfully navigated through all the activities, how did you do it? What went well, what would you do differently next time? Be cautious about being complacent. Some people survive the holidays only to relapse in January.

Living with an active addict

For the active addict and their family, chaos reigns. The alcohol, drugs, gambling or sex have control. If the problem has been going on for a long time, it is likely that this year will be a repeat of other years. Family and friends get anxious, fearful and stressed out just anticipating what is likely going to happen during the holidays. When an active addict is home, the holidays can be full of pain, disappointment, anger, regrets and sadness. For family and friends, the New Year continues with more anxiety, fear and stress.

Addiction is like an octopus that sends out its tentacles, grabs the people around the addict, and pulls them down toward despair. It is called a family disease. However, family members do not have to wait until the addict decides to get help before they do something. Spouses, partners, children and friends can get help for themselves. Call a treatment centre in your area. Ask if they have a family program. Ask for names of counsellors or doctors who help families. Call the counsellor and make an appointment. Do it now! There is great relief when you have someone to talk to who understands what you are coping with. You can learn how to reduce the stress in your own body rather than worrying about the addict. Children can learn that it is not their fault. Since children of addicts are at a higher

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risk for developing an addiction themselves, teaching them early is the best prevention. Children learn from their parents. You can teach them that in times of trouble, it is okay to reach out for help. Or, you can let them continue to observe how you and the addict cope with life's problems. Family members can take action that breaks the cycle of addiction and reduces the stress and the chaos. If you do not change the way you are handling your life, and the stress continues and continues, you can expect to develop your own physical and mental health problems.

Al-Anon is a free, self-help program for family and friends of alcoholics. It is the sister program to Alcoholics Anonymous and there are meetings everywhere. Nar-Anon is for families of drug addicts and the sister organization of Narcotics Anonymous. Gam-Anon is the sister program for Gamblers Anonymous. Check the yellow pages. The Internet also has many resources and there are actually meetings on-line.

The addict may also be remorseful about their actions over the holidays. However, they may appear to be angry and be pushing their loved ones further away. Addicts have an uncanny ability to leave others thinking that all the problems are their fault. In spite of all the outward bravado, the addict also starts the New Year with anxiety, fear and stress. They know they are trapped and cannot find a way out. In their remorse, there may be a New Year's resolution to stop. For families, they have heard this promise before.

It is important to remember that in their addiction, the addict is not making rational decisions. The baffling part of an addiction is that the addict minimizes all the consequences that are falling out around them. They constantly deny them. They are so good at it that they actually convince themselves that what they are saying is the truth. It is like having a short circuit in the brain. Therefore, why would we expect the addict to make a rational decision about getting help? They need help to make the decision.

The New Year can be a time for families and friends to take action, to learn about, and to implement an "intervention". The vast majority of addicts do not come into treatment because they have seen the light. They come because there is a crisis in their life. An intervention may be just the crisis that is needed. Counsellors are available to help coach you on the intervention process.

Take time to plan a little more for this coming holiday season. If you need help, find help and make the call. You are not alone. Strive for balance and taking care of yourself. If you are successful, then, when January comes, you will not be dealing with leftovers from the holiday season.

Be well everyone.

Addiction & Recovery: *Discover the Freedom of Being Well*

What really happens in treatment?

Do I have to live at the facility?

What do I learn?

How long do I have to stay?

Will I be cured?

Is it true that ...?

These are some of the pressing questions on people's minds when considering treatment. For the individual, their family members, friends or colleagues, these are very important questions. Having a clear understanding of what treatment looks like can ease the anxiety and fears that can be a barrier to enjoying a life without dependence on substances and addictive behaviours.

Addiction & Recovery: Discover the Freedom of Being Well are information nights designed to help people find the answers to critical questions that can be preventing someone from seeking treatment. These **confidential** education sessions provide an opportunity for interested parties to learn more about addiction treatment. Special attention is given to discussing some of the myths and misconceptions of treatment and addiction. The sessions are facilitated by Bellwood staff who can answer all of your questions about addictions, treatment, and Bellwood's programs.

Make a decision now to attend the next Information Night. For more information or to register, call the Bellwood Intake Department at (416) 495-0926.

Join us and take the first step towards
"Discovering the Freedom of Being Well!"

M. Linda Bell, ICADC, FACATA, CCS, is the President and CEO of Bellwood Health Services.

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Bellwood Alumni Corner

“Celebrating the Freedom of Being Well”

The 2008 Alumni BBQ Celebrating Recovery Rain or Shine!



*Latin & Mediterranean
World Music &
Entertainment*

*There are better
things ahead than
any we leave behind.*
- C. S. Lewis



*Other Entertainment
by Don and David*

*Gourmet BBQ Creativity
by Chez Daniel*



*Puppeteers and
Fishing Games*

New Bellwood Outpatient Addiction Treatment Group

Bellwood is offering a holistic approach to help individuals live their lives without a dependence on substances or behaviours. This new outpatient group is open to individuals struggling with alcohol and drug dependencies, problem gambling and eating disorders.

The program is delivered by highly skilled professionals, including physicians and addiction counselors.

The new 10-week program will be held on Thursday

evenings from 6:30 pm - 9 pm. Attendance at an introductory two-hour Education Evening will be a prerequisite for participation in the group.

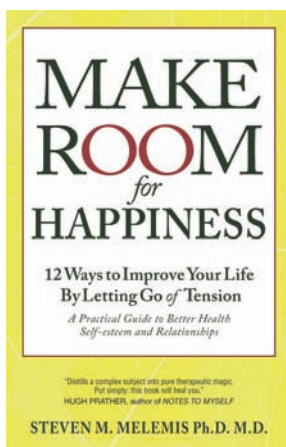
Men and women 19 years of age and over are eligible, based on an assessment.

For more details, call the Bellwood Intake Department at (416) 495-0926.

Specialized Bellwood outpatient programs and individual counselling are also available for issues relating to sexual addiction and eating disorders.

MAKE ROOM FOR HAPPINESS

Bellwood Physician Dr. Steven Melemis Turns Author



Congratulations to Bellwood Staff Physician *Dr. Steven Melemis, Ph.D., M.D.*, on the publication of his new book, *“Make Room for Happiness - 12 Ways to Improve Your Life By Letting Go of Tension”*.

The main idea of this insightful and practical book is that letting go of tension is the missing piece to improving your life. Tension not only makes you unhappy, it keeps you stuck in your unhappiness. When you're tense you tend to do

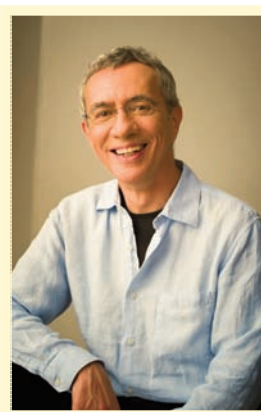
what's familiar and wrong instead of what's new and right.

This book takes a new approach to self-help. You will improve your life by letting go of the tension that's getting in your way.

There are three parts to the book: One – see how tension causes unhappiness and how it is an obstacle to change; Two – learn a simple and powerful mindbody relaxation technique to reduce your tension; Three – learn how to apply that technique to improve specific areas of your life quickly.

Read a clear step-by-step explanation of how to relax. Learn how and why relaxation works. The mindbody relaxation technique in this book combines traditional meditation with psychology and medicine to produce a modern approach to relaxation. Read tips that will help you overcome common relaxation problems. There is a one-month relaxation program to get you started. The book is based on 20 years of experience, and contains techniques that have been proven to improve people's lives.

You'll find this book interesting if you want to improve your relationships, let go of resentments, reduce fears and anxieties, improve your self-esteem, or recover from depression. Tension affects almost every aspect of life. Letting go of tension is that one simple idea that can transform your life.



Dr. Melemis was born in Toronto. He has a Ph.D. and M.D. from the University of Toronto, and a Postdoctoral Fellowship from the University of California at Berkeley. He has received the honour of Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine.

Dr. Melemis has lectured widely and has been interviewed for television, radio, and print. He has worked for over 20 years in addiction medicine and mood disorders, is a Medical

Inspector for the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, and a Clinical Advisor to the Physician Health Program of the Ontario Medical Association. He is also Past Vice-Chair of Addiction Medicine for the Ontario Medical Association.

“Make Room for Happiness” is available at:

Amazon.com
BarnesAndNoble.com
Amazon.ca
Indigo.ca



The Gordon Bell
Foundation
for the
Prevention of Addiction
www.gbfaaddiction.com

The Gordon Bell Foundation for the Prevention of Addiction is a charitable organization engaged in addiction prevention activities. The Foundation promotes awareness of problems related to abuse of alcohol, drugs, food, tobacco and gambling with a focus on funding adolescent treatment, education and prevention activities.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to help support the Foundation's prevention and awareness activities, please forward a cheque, made payable to:

**The Gordon Bell Foundation
for the Prevention of Addiction
1020 McNicoll Avenue, Toronto, ON M1W 2J6
Attention: J. Laird**

Who's New At Bellwood

Dave Marder - Program Assistant;
Robin Prousky - Fitness Relaxation Instructor; **Barak Raz** - Therapist.

Terry Flynn will be leaving his therapist role at the end of the year to dedicate more time to enjoy his personal interests. We are pleased that Terry will continue to be a part of the Bellwood team in his role as Director of Spiritual Care.

Please Let Us Know

We want to ensure that you are receiving the Bellwood News and other important announcements about upcoming educational events and new program announcements.

If you presently receive our mailings via regular post but would prefer email notification, please let us know.

Contact Jennifer Teran at jteran@bellwood.ca with your full name, current mailing address and the email address you would like us to use for future correspondence.

The **Bellwood News** is edited by the Bellwood Marketing Department. Written authorization must be obtained for the reprint of any material in this newsletter.

If you have comments, or wish to have your name removed from the mailing list, please contact (416) 847-0752, or email jteran@bellwood.ca.

Education and Training Opportunities for Professionals

One of the cornerstones of Bellwood's mission is to be a centre of excellence in addiction education and training. We offer a wide range of resources designed to assist professionals understand how they can play a role in leading a patient or employee towards a new life without dependence on a substance or behaviour.

Whether you work in a health care or corporate environment, opportunities will arise for you to help someone struggling with an addiction. By knowing how to identify the signs and offer effective guidance, you can facilitate the critical first steps in someone's treatment and recovery.

Bellwood offers many types of training opportunities including: conference presentations, grand rounds, customized corporate-focused workshops, lunch and learn presentations, and Professionals in Residence Days.

The following are some upcoming scheduled education and training events. For a complete list of events and dates, visit the Events section of www.bellwood.ca.

Professionals in Residence Days

Addiction Treatment Information Seminars for Professionals

Meet our staff, and learn about our comprehensive treatment programs and how Bellwood can be a resource for treatment and education.

Final 2008 Date - November 27, 2008

2009 Schedule

February 18

April 29

June 4

September 17

October 28

November 25

To register, contact Jennifer Teran at jteran@bellwood.ca, or call (416) 847-0752, toll free (800) 387-6198, Ext 302.

Conferences and Presentations

Tri-County Seminar on Substance Abuse in the Workplace - London - Nov 20, 2008

North York General Hospital Family Medicine Clinic Day - Toronto - Jan 17, 2009

HR Professionals Association of Ontario - Toronto - Jan 28-30, 2009

Be sure to attend "Addictions in the Workplace - The Facts" presented by Bellwood therapist Jennifer Kotry on Jan 28 at 2:45 pm.

Emergency Nursing Update Conference - Markham - Feb 27, 2009

5 Chiefs - Toronto - Apr 18, 2009

Emergency Medicine Update - Toronto - April 30-May 2, 2009