

# Balanced LIVING

## What to do...

### WHEN THE FAMILY FEELS CLAUSTROPHOBIC

There comes a time when even the closest families find themselves too close together. Suddenly, the house seems smaller; the kids are whiny, fighting with each other or acting up in other ways. Worse, you are ready to burst and it becomes clear that your usually peaceful, friendly household is full of people who wish they were anywhere but there — including yourself.

It's time to get up and get out, advises Martin Goldberg, M.D., a psychiatrist and director of the Penn Council for Relationships. "People pay too little attention to the need to be outside, to be active," he said.

**Go for a walk.** "It's a good way to be out and active and meeting other people," Dr. Goldberg said. (If the weather is inclement, do your walking at the local mall.)

**Plan mini-vacations, like a weekend or day trip.** To break up a routine that's become monotonous, Dr. Goldberg recommends having new things to look forward to.

**Invite company over.** "It shakes up the cast of characters, and children are always better behaved around company," he said.

**Create separate space.** Mom's night out. Dad's afternoon out. An outing with friends for the kids.

When the walls start closing in and the whining starts, "discipline" can be simply showing your children something new to do, says Maurie D. Pressman, M.D., founder of the Pressman Center for Mind/Body Wellness in Philadelphia.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



# When the family FEELS CLAUSTROPHOBIC

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“There was a time when we told stories, when we used to make things, instead of just sitting in front of the television,” says Dr. Pressman. Rein in your children with engaging, imaginative pursuits like arts and crafts, puzzle solving, thought-provoking games or helping you to cook, he said.

“Kids are a great joy,” Dr. Pressman says, “but they are very demanding. They need a loving environment, but they also need discipline.”

If your children are younger, taking a “timeout” often works to restore calm, says Robert R. Prentice, M.D., a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Timeouts should be in a boring place with no distractions, and the child should be told ahead of time how long the timeout will be. These are especially effective if you have more than one child and they won’t stop fighting, Dr. Prentice says. You can separate them and put them each in timeout.

*The StayWell Company, LLC ©2018*



## Will your HOLIDAY BE BLUE?

According to the National Mental Health Association (NMHA), depression peaks over the holidays. The unrealistic expectations of the season, time and financial pressures, missing loved ones and reflecting on past events as the year comes to an end all contribute.

During the holidays, a person can experience depression, loneliness, sadness, isolation, anger and abnormal sleep. Those who don’t experience depression can experience other symptoms such as headaches, tension, fatigue, excessive drinking and over-eating.

It is also common to feel a holiday let down after the holidays are over. The hectic holiday period, and the feeling of being physically and emotionally drained can leave you with the sense of loss or frustration, and then that can turn into the blues.

The holiday blues can range from mild sadness during the holidays to severe depression, and they are often a normal reaction to life situations.

### Disagreement over the term

The holiday blues are not a diagnosable clinical disorder. In fact, there is no agreement among mental health experts as to whether the phenomenon actually exists, because there is no increase in the number of people who seek mental health services in November and December.

**The holiday blues should not be confused with clinical depression.**

Clinical depression is a disorder that may need to be relieved with medication, while the holiday blues could require something as simple as a good listener. Clinical depression, however, can be triggered in a number of ways at or just after the holidays.

There is also a tendency to link the holiday blues with seasonal affective disorder (SAD). SAD, however, is a diagnosable disorder that is caused by fewer hours of sunlight during the winter.

Although people with the holiday blues can also be afflicted with SAD, the two are not directly related. Patients with SAD suffer the symptoms not only throughout the holiday season, but throughout the autumn and winter seasons.

### Keeping the blues away

The holiday blues may be alleviated with something as simple as getting enough rest. People actually lose sleep during the holidays and end up shortchanging themselves, so the brain needs to

recuperate. Consequences of not getting enough sleep might be cloudy thinking, irritability and inability to deal with everyday stress.

Other ways to help ease the blues are to eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and to start exercising. Also, make an effort to be more positive.

### Tips to ease the blues

If you are experiencing holiday blues, try to decrease or alleviate them by doing these things:

- **Talk to someone honestly.**
- **Limit alcohol intake.**
- **Stick within your normal life routine as much as possible.**
- **Stick to a realistic budget.**
- **Establish realistic goals and expectations.**
- **Do not label the season as a time to cure past problems.**
- **Find time for yourself.**
- **Enjoy free holiday activities.**
- **Try to celebrate the holiday in a different way.**

The StayWell Company, LLC © 2018

## Dressing for winter MYTHS & TIPS

Poor planning of a winter outing can lead to frostbite and hypothermia. The following are some misconceptions about the cold, and some suggestions for staying toasty this winter.

### **MYTH:** Dressing warmly avoids cold, virus, flu

A Mom was wrong on this one — mostly. If you haven't been exposed to a virus, cold weather won't make any difference.

Robert Pozos, Ph.D., director of the thermal division at the Naval Health Research Center in San Diego, has put this theory to the test. He led a study in which researchers immersed 250 medical students in cold water until their body temperatures dropped to

95 degrees — the point at which hypothermia begins. Some subjects got dehydrated and suffered slight cases of constipation, but none of them caught colds or viruses.

The researchers did find out that the body's defenses go down if the body is worn out. One student pulled an all-nighter before going to the laboratory. His body temperature dropped much more quickly than the others, Dr. Pozos says.

"The body has tremendous resistance," Dr. Pozos says. "People who get sick after being in the cold are already pretty sick anyway. Cold is just another stressor, like mowing the lawn or opening up your mail and finding out you owe income taxes."

### **MYTH:** You lose more body heat through your head

There's nothing special about your head. You'll lose body heat from any part of your body that is exposed. It's a good idea to wear a hat, but other parts of your body must also be covered to keep you from getting cold, experts say.

The amount of heat you can lose through your head depends upon a number of factors, including how thick your hair is and how much energy you expend in the cold. You can expect anywhere from 5 to 55 percent heat loss from the head.

### **MYTH:** Men & women feel cold at the same temperature

Ever notice that women's hands and feet tend to get colder before men's? It's because the external temperature at which men's and women's bodies begin conserving heat — called the set point temperature — varies by about three degrees.

When surrounding temperatures drop to a certain point, your body will conserve heat by shutting off the blood flow to the hands and feet, making them feel chilled. For women, that temperature is about 70 degrees, while men can hold steady until about 67 or 68 degrees.

### **MYTH:** Dress in layers to stay warm

It's true that dressing in layers allows people to adjust for different levels of activity. But one well-made, warm garment will do just as well to keep away the winter chills, Dr. Pozos says.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



# WINTER MYTHS & TIPS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

“In the old days, people didn’t know about dressing in layers,” Dr. Pozos says. “They wore big old parkas instead.” A good all-purpose garment might be a parka made of real animal fur, wool or a good synthetic material, says Dr. Pozos.

Dressing in layers does have merit, particularly for someone exercising in the cold, he adds. For the best results, he suggests wearing polypropylene or another synthetic fabric next to the skin, a knit middle layer (which can be taken off if you get too warm) and a synthetic outer layer.

### **MYTH:** Cotton is a good insulator

Don’t drag those old cotton long johns out of the closet yet. They may be comfortable for lazing before a fire, but they can be downright dangerous outside in the cold.

When cotton gets wet, it conducts heat away from the body at a much more rapid rate than other fabrics, says Andrew J. Young, Ph.D., an exercise physiologist with the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine in Natick, Mass. Anything that can dampen your clothes — such as perspiration, rain or falling in the water — can cause cotton to start robbing you of heat fast.

A good substitute is polypropylene, capilene or some other synthetic substance that pulls water away from your skin.

### **MYTH:** Drinking alcohol will keep you warm

Drinking alcohol may make you feel warm because it causes blood to rush to your skin’s surface. But it actually causes your blood vessels to dilate and makes you lose heat faster. Drinking alcohol in the cold also impairs the shivering process, which generates extra body heat.

But the worst part about alcohol consumption is that it impairs judgment. In a study of 10 emergency rooms across the country, 85 percent of hypothermia cases were related to drug and alcohol use, Dr. Pozos says. “It gives you a false sense of security, and then you end up doing something stupid,” he says.

*The StayWell Company, LLC © 2018*

