



Dr. Martin's Newsletter

OCT/NOV 2006 EDITION

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1

**FREE Workshop on
Dec. 16th.
"Steps to Personal
Change with
Mindfulness".
Limited to 20.
Sign-up by email
at:
[Dr.Martin@martha
martinphd.com](mailto:Dr.Martin@marthamartinphd.com)
Or Call (360)
835-1070**

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Brrrrrrrrrr.....it's very cold!

Message from Dr. Martin



Welcome to the first edition of Volume 2 of my FREE newsletter for clients and the community. One year has passed since I started publishing these newsletters, and another year starts now. The content is based upon requests from my readers, clients, and supportive professionals, as well as my good friends. Writing this each month is a labor of love, and it allows me to continue to grow and learn, as well as educate the public. Continue to send me your ideas and requests. And let me know if you would like a friend or family member added to the mailing list. I am always happy to include new folks.

It looks like fall is drifting away, as I watch the snow fly outside my office window. The temperature is dropping as winter is here earlier than usual. It's important to keep yourself healthy, so don't forget to eat nutritious food, get plenty of rest and exercise, and wash those hands. And make sure your pets are warm in good shelters. The cold weather can be hard on them as well.

At this time, the next **FREE Workshop** will be December 16th. Complimentary coffee and tea and networking are at 2:30pm, and the workshop starts at 3pm, ending at 4:30pm. The space will be quiet and comfortable, and since the topic is about Mindfulness, this works very well. The class will be located two doors west of my own office at **106 SE Weir Street in Suite 2, Camas, Washington**. The title is "**Steps to Personal Change with Mindfulness**". You will learn how to pay attention (remember your mother telling you to do that?), relax and quiet your thoughts, and take simple but purposeful steps toward positive personal change.

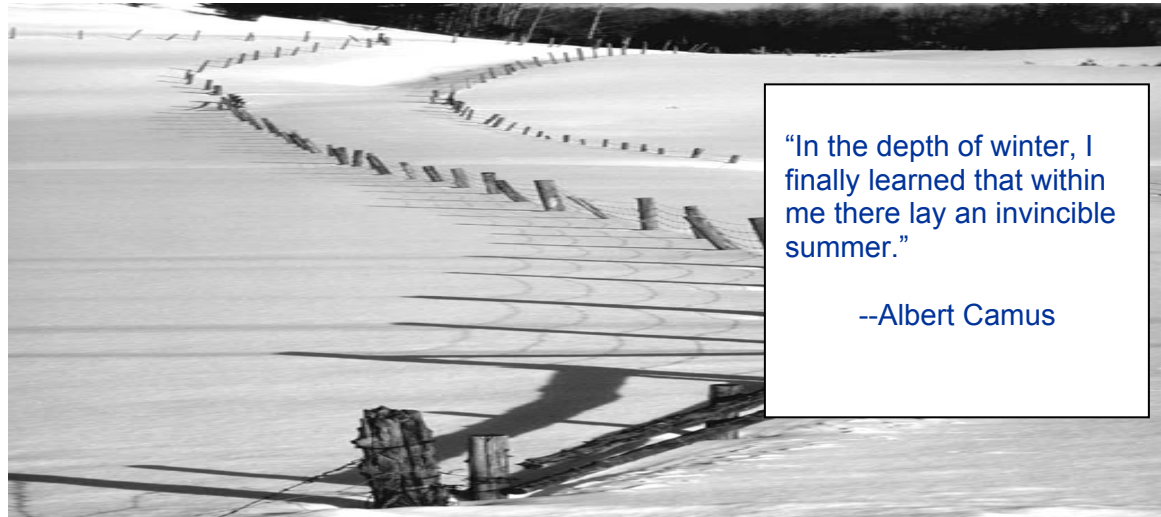
You will experience feeling calm and relaxed, and leave with exercises to continue to practice at home. Let me know that you will be attending, and I will hold a space for you. The workshop is limited to 20 people. Email: Dr.Martin@marthamartinphd.com or Call (360) 835-1070.

Keep watching the website for the next **Women's Retreats**. A Day Retreat (location to be determined) will be for all women, and will offer a wonderful day full of wonderful experiences. The focus will be on comfort, fun, good food, beautiful surroundings, and great people. Let me know if you would like to attend and some things you would like to see included. Visit the website for updates at www.marthamartinphd.com,

Another weekend retreat will be at Royal Ridges Retreat, and will be especially for women health care professionals; counselors, coaches, naturopaths, massage therapists, yoga instructors, Reflexologists, and others. This retreat will be offered at a VERY affordable rate, and will be planned with your needs in mind. Let me know if you would want to attend, and experiences you would like to have included. Visit my website at www.marthamartinphd.com for updates.

This month's special business is **Portraits by Minda** owned by Minda Coombs of Camas, Washington. You may notice I have a new picture at the top left of this newsletter; this was taken by Minda Coombs. She is a lovely person, and has a fabulous eye for capturing the intimate humanness of people in her photography. Her portraits, some of which she has displayed in her home studio, are a range of black and white or color shots that make you stop and ponder each one. Visit her website for more information at www.portraitsbyminda.com or call Minda at (360) 904-0678.

This edition will include articles about how to cope with holiday blues, how to deal with difficult people, changing distorted and stressful thinking, how to treat seasonal affective disorder, and knowing what to look for in a good counselor. The new Humor Corner is back for the second time. Thanks to all of you making requests and sending great ideas!



Topics for this edition:

- ***Coping with the Holiday Blues***
- ***Dealing with Difficult People***

- *Steps to Change Distorted and Stressful Thinking*
 - *Seasonal Affective Disorder and Winter Depression*
 - *Ingredients of Good Counseling*
 - **"New" Humor Corner**
-

Coping with the Holiday Blues

Edited by Dr. Martin

With the holidays just about here, so, too, are the comforting seasonal images of cheer -- family get-togethers, lavish dinners, and the bustle of shopping and gift-giving.

But for some, the holidays are a source of sadness. The period from Thanksgiving to New Year's can offer unwanted reminders of loss -- perhaps the death of a loved one or a recent divorce.



stress, fatigue, lack of sunlight, unrealistic expectations, images in the media, and financial constraints.

The holidays also come at the end of the year, when people tend to evaluate what they have done in the previous year. If they feel like they haven't made sufficient progress, they may feel a sense of loss.

People struggling with the holiday blues may experience feelings of sadness, tension, and stress; changes in sleep patterns; a lack of energy; diminished interest in favorite activities; or excessive drinking or eating.

Ways to Cope

It's especially important to maintain healthful lifestyle patterns and getting together with others during the holidays. Make a special effort to get as much sunlight as possible, exercise regularly, eat a healthful diet, and keep up social connections during the holiday season.

If you're feeling sad, stressed, or tense during the holidays, here are a few suggestions:

- Set reasonable goals. To avoid overextending yourself during the holidays, plan ahead, avoid chaotic situations, and stick to a budget.
- Have reasonable expectations. If your holidays aren't perfect, that's OK. Prioritize what is and isn't important for you to do.
- Get enough rest. Set aside time for you to relax and sleep during the busy season.
- Avoid dwelling on the past. If you find yourself focusing on unpleasant thoughts, find something else to do, such as taking a walk or visiting a friend.
- Focus on the positive. Instead of worrying about what you haven't done in the past year, talk with someone about all the positive things that have happened during that time.
- Don't overindulge in alcohol or food. Enjoy holiday meals in moderation, because excessive food and drink will just make you feel worse.

Fortunately, the symptoms of depression associated with the holiday season usually don't last. The holiday blues should lift within a couple of weeks after the holiday season ends.

But get help if you think you need it. If you have a marked change in your sleep or energy patterns, or struggle with thoughts of self-harm or suicide, seek the help of an experienced psychologist or counselor.

Dealing with Difficult People

Edited by Dr. Martin



Research shows that supportive relationships are good for our mental and physical health. However, negative relationships are actually detrimental to our health. Therefore, it's a good idea to diminish or eliminate relationships that are filled with conflict. But what do you do if the person in question is a family member, co-worker, or someone you otherwise can't easily eliminate from your life? The following are tips for dealing with difficult people when they're necessary in your life:

Here's How:

1. Avoid discussing divisive and personal issues like religion and politics, or other issues that tend to cause conflict. If the other person tries to engage you in a discussion that will probably become an argument, change the subject, or even leave the room.
2. In dealing with difficult people, don't try to change the other person; you will only get into a power struggle, cause defensiveness, invite criticism, or otherwise make things worse. It also makes *you* a more difficult person to deal with.
3. Change *your response* to the other person; this is all you have the power to change. For example, don't feel you need to accept abusive behavior. You can use *assertive communication* to draw boundaries when the other person chooses to treat you in an unacceptable way.
4. Remember that most relationship difficulties are due to a *dynamic* between two people rather than one person being unilaterally 'bad'.
5. Especially when dealing with family, try to look for the positive aspects of the other person, and focus on these. The other person will feel more appreciated, and you will likely enjoy your time with them more.
6. However, don't pretend the other person's negative traits don't exist. Don't tell your secrets to a gossip, don't rely on a flake, don't look for affection from someone who isn't able to give it. This is part of accepting them for who they are.
7. Get your needs met from other people who are able to meet your needs. (Tell your secrets to a trustworthy friend or to your journal, for example; rely on people who have proven themselves to be trustworthy.) This will help you *and* the other person by taking pressure off the relationship and removing a source of conflict.
8. Know when it's time to distance yourself, and do so. If the other person can't be around you without antagonizing you, minimizing contact may be key. If they're continually abusive, you may choose to cut ties, and let them know why. Tell them what needs to happen if there ever is to be a relationship, and let it go. (If the offending party is a boss or co-worker, you might consider switching jobs.)

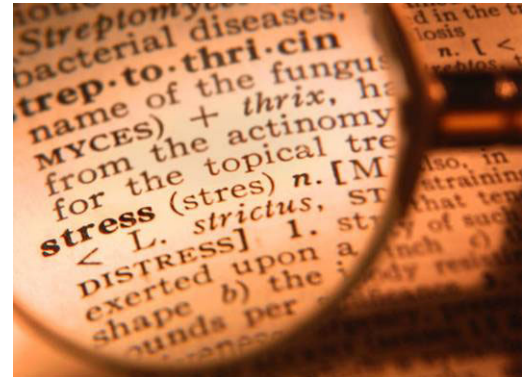
Tips:

1. Try not to place blame on yourself or the other person for the negative interactions. It may just be a 'poor personality fit' between the two of you.
2. Remember that you don't have to be 'close' with everyone; just being polite goes a long way toward getting along and appropriately dealing with difficult people.
3. Keep your sense of humor, and difficulties can roll off your back much more easily.
4. Be sure to cultivate other more positive relationships in your life to offset the negativity of dealing with difficult people.

Steps to Change Distorted and Stressful Thinking

Edited by Dr. Martin

If you're like most people, every once in awhile your thoughts can be distorted or negative. Cognitive restructuring, a technique used by some psychologists or counselors, helps you identify and challenge overly simplistic, negative thoughts that can cause unnecessary distress.



It's easiest, of course, when the thoughts are patently untrue: "I never do anything right," for example. It's harder when there's an element of truth mixed in with simplistic falsehoods: "At my age, I know I'll never reach my goals."

If you always longed to be a famous opera singer but you lacked the time and talent to bring your dream to fruition, that statement may apply. For one goal. Most likely, though, you could list other goals that you did reach. And if you scaled down your dream by realizing that you enjoy singing, whether or not the audience of the Metropolitan Opera pays rapt attention, you could even set course for a new goal and actually meet it.

This four-step process taught at the Mind/Body Medical Institute is one way to help derail stress that stems from distortions and negative thoughts:

1. **Stop.** Consciously call a mental time-out.
2. **Breathe.** Take a few deep breaths to release burgeoning tension.
3. **Reflect.** Ask some hard questions. Is this thought or belief true? Did I jump to a conclusion? What evidence do I actually have? Am I letting negative thoughts balloon? Is there another way to view the situation? What would be the worst that could happen? Does it help me to think this way?
4. **Choose.** Decide how to deal with the source of your stress. If distortion is the root of the problem, can you recognize this and let go? Practicing relaxation exercises, such as focused breathing or visual imagery, may help. If the problem is real, are there practical steps you can take to cope with it?

Restructuring negative thoughts and distortions takes practice. You needn't ignore reality or put on an artificially happy face. Often it's possible to shift your focus toward the positive, rather than dwelling on the negative. At other times, you can acknowledge a painful truth without losing sight of the larger, more positive picture.

For example, "I should be practicing relaxation techniques every day" can be rephrased as "I want to practice relaxation techniques every day," or "I feel calmer and happier when I practice relaxation techniques regularly." Rather than berating yourself for falling short, encourage yourself to keep finding time.

When an illness flares up and leaves you feeling hopeless, it may help to acknowledge this without allowing it to engulf you. Change "I'll never get any better" to "I feel sick and in pain today. I know that I can try a combination of medications and techniques to help relieve my discomfort. Next week, I'll probably feel better and be able to follow my normal schedule."

Often, you can benefit from a friend's perspective on a problem or issue that seems insurmountable. He or she may recognize a major flaw in your thinking that has escaped your notice. Or it may help to distract yourself from the problem rather than continuing to worry about it. Try using a brief relaxation moment, such as breathing exercises, or calm yourself through imagery.

If distortions are particularly thorny or deeply ingrained, seek help from a licensed psychologist or counselor who has experience with cognitive restructuring or has training from a mind/body program.

Seasonal Affective Disorder and Winter Depression

Edited by Dr. Martin

Many people feel sad when summer wanes, but some actually develop depression with the season's change. Known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD), this form of depression affects about 1%–2% of the population, particularly women and young people. Symptoms are similar to general depression and include lethargy, loss of interest in once-pleasurable activities, irritability, inability to concentrate, and a change in sleeping patterns, appetite, or both.



SAD seems to be triggered by more limited exposure to daylight; typically it comes on during the fall or winter months and subsides in the spring. While experts don't fully understand the cause of SAD, some speculate that the hormone melatonin, which helps regulate your body's sleep-wake cycle (circadian rhythm), plays a role. The brain secretes melatonin at night, so longer periods of darkness in the winter months may spur greater production of this hormone. Researchers also believe that the same neurotransmitters implicated in other forms of depression are involved in SAD.

To combat SAD, doctors suggest exercise, particularly outdoor activities during daylight hours. Exposing yourself to bright artificial light may also help. Light therapy, also called phototherapy, usually involves sitting close to a special light source that is far more intense than normal indoor light for 30 minutes every morning. The light must enter through your eyes to be effective; skin exposure has not been proven to work. Some people feel better after only one light treatment, but most people require at least a few days of treatment, and some need several weeks. You can buy boxes that emit the proper light intensity (10,000 lux) with a minimal amount of ultraviolet light without a prescription, but it is best to work with a professional who can monitor your response.

There are few side effects to light therapy, but you should be aware of the following potential problems:

- Mild anxiety, jitteriness, headaches, early awakening, or eyestrain can occur.
- There is evidence that light therapy can trigger a manic episode in people who are vulnerable.
- While there is no proof that light therapy can aggravate an eye problem, you should still discuss any eye disease with your doctor before starting light therapy. Likewise, since rashes can result, let your doctor know about any skin conditions.
- Some drugs or herbs (for example, St. John's wort) can make you sensitive to light.

If light therapy isn't helpful, antidepressants may offer relief. For an accurate diagnosis and recommendations, seek out a psychologist, counselor, naturopath, or other qualified and licensed professional.

Ingredients of Good Counseling

Edited by Dr. Martin

There are many different approaches to counseling, but all good therapy shares some common elements. To start with, make sure that your psychologist or counselor has a state license. While counseling isn't always comfortable, you should feel reasonably at ease with your counselor. In the best case, the two of you will be, or will become, a good match. Of course, both of you must respect ethical and professional boundaries.



It's important that counseling provide some relief. Your counselor should not only offer reassurance and support, but also suggest a clear plan for how counseling will proceed. You and your counselor should agree upon realistic goals for counseling early on. While well-defined problems might be addressed relatively quickly, you may need to approach more difficult problems from many angles, which will take longer.

Since mood disorders can have a broad influence on relationships, work, school, and leisure activities, counseling should address these areas when — or if possible before — they become a problem. Counseling isn't just for uncovering painful thoughts, although that's part of the work. Good counseling also addresses how you can adjust, adapt, or function better. And it helps you understand the nature of your distress. You should feel that your counselor approaches the important issues in your life in a way that's unique to your needs, not from a one-size-fits-all perspective. Pertinent issues springing from your culture, sex, and age, as well as individual differences, should shape the direction counseling takes.

If a doctor other than your counselor prescribes antidepressants for you, the two should communicate. If they don't do so on their own, you may want to encourage collaboration by asking your counselor and doctor to speak regularly. Your counselor ought to understand the medication portion of your treatment, encourage you to take medications as prescribed, and help monitor your response.

Although it's not uncommon to feel stuck at times, don't persist for months with that feeling. Some difficult problems take a long time to unravel, but you should sense progress. If you don't, it's a sign that the match between you and either the technique or the therapist isn't right. If four to six months have gone by and you don't feel better, it's a good idea to consult another therapist.

Humor Corner

This is second edition to include this much requested item. I had a lot of positive feedback following last month's edition to continue this, so I will. These are some brief things that have come my way, and I pass them on to you.

Things to Ponder:

What WAS the best thing before sliced bread?

Why are they called apartments, when they're all stuck together?

Why did Superman stop bullets with his chest, but he always ducked when someone threw a gun at him?

Why do we put suits in a garment bag and garments in a suitcase?



When you open a bag of cotton balls, is the top one meant to be thrown away?

What should you do when you see an endangered animal eating an endangered plant?

Is it possible to be totally partial?

Things found on actual job applications:

"I intentionally omitted my salary history. I've made money and lost money. I've been rich and I've been poor. I prefer being rich."

"Note: Please don't misconstrue my 14 jobs as 'job-hopping'. I have never quit a job."

"Number of dependents: 40."

"My goal is to be a meteorologist. But since I have no training in meteorology, I suppose I should try stock brokerage."

A holiday philosophy on the stages of life:

There are three stages of man: he believes in Santa Claus; he does not believe in Santa Claus; he is Santa Claus. (Bob Phillips)

Contact Dr. Martin for counseling appointments at:

(360) 835-1070

- Appointments are scheduled Wednesday through Saturday.
- Available times are: weekdays 9am to 7pm; weekends 9am to 6pm.
- New clients are being accepted.
- Evening appointments are available.
- All major credit cards and checks accepted.
- To keep session rates affordable, direct insurance billing is not offered. However, I will assist you in getting reimbursement from your insurance company by providing you with a paid invoice which you can submit to them following each appointment. Check with your insurance to see if this is available.
- The Counseling process is short-term, brief, and solution focused. Let me help you move forward quickly!

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See my website for more details about services offered.

"Keep your friends and family close."



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