

Wellness 2000... Holiday 2009 Notes



Holidays Can Bring Mixed Feelings

"The ghosts of holidays past" will be a part of the holidays whether we are aware of them or not. "Ghosts" aren't necessarily scary or negative. They are just people and scenes from the past that surface from our memory to influence our thoughts and feelings in the present.

Is it any wonder that we approach the holidays with mixed feelings? Sometimes we are surprised at the intensity of emotions that well up as we begin our planning. Feelings of sadness, loss, anger, resentment, guilt, neediness, love, gratitude... are all in the wide realm of "normal" at this time of year. Mixed with the bombardment of commercial messages from our environment, this emotional overload contributes to the way we prepare for this year's celebration.

Reacting with an almost frantic need to "make this the best holiday ever" and determination to give our children better memories than we have is normal. Attempting to assure that our children have the same positive holiday experiences that we did is also normal. They can also be exhausting and financially draining. Driving ourselves to "make wonderful memories" is usually self-defeating. We can not "make" memories wonderful. We can provide an atmosphere conducive to warm and comfortable experiences by deciding what is important to us and to those we love, forgetting about needless extras.

Putting "the ghosts of holidays past" to rest is not done in one moment or one season. It is a part of growing older and growing up. It begins with identifying the feelings we carry with us into the season; happy, sad, painful. It continues with coming to accept our memories as part of us and of the past. We cannot change the past. Trying to heal old wounds or neutralize feelings of loss by creating ever more complicated and extravagant rituals can only lead to exhaustion and frustration.