

October, 2010 Newsletter

Awaken from Holiday Amnesia

Holiday amnesia. It's a self-induced condition appearing around the holidays. You know: the lapse into unconscious doing, buying, and trying to have everything perfect! Your expectations soar along with your credit card bills, and to-do lists multiply like guppies. On Christmas morning, you wake up exhausted, and resolve to do it differently next year.

Holiday amnesia is a seasonal forgetting. First of all, you forget the insights gleaned from last year's experience, and feel compelled to do it all. Secondly, you forget who you are, what you're doing, and to whom you're talking because you're preoccupied with thinking, organizing, and executing every detail.

The funny thing about amnesia is that you don't remember you're forgetting, like being unaware you are dreaming in the middle of a nightmare. You wake up and know you were asleep. The quicker we recognize unconsciousness or mindlessness, the quicker we can return to consciousness or mindfulness.

Pointers for a Playful and Peaceful Holiday

- ❖ **Pace Yourself** – Have you noticed how our expectations roar out of control around the holidays? We wish for everything perfect, everything beautiful, and everything on our long, long list to be done! This year instead of sprinting like a marathon runner doing it all, all by yourself, choose differently. Just for fun, as best as you can, slow down, pace yourself, and let the season become a meditation on “play”. Keep focused on the present moment and what's right in front of you. You might be pleasantly surprised to discover how your to-do list gets done in magical, serendipitous ways, or if your list doesn't get done – how it really doesn't matter.
- ❖ **Presence Rather Than Presents** – It's easy to get preoccupied with shopping, cleaning, cooking, wrapping, and doing – we become “absent-minded”. Regardless of the tasks in which you are engaged, take a deep breath, relax,

and imagine breathing through your belly button as a way of becoming aware of yourself. Constantly bringing yourself back to this state of being present, you give your attention or “presence”, rather than “presents,” to those around you. You’ll notice ordinary moments transform into heartfelt connections whose memory endures long beyond the season. Miraculously, being present slows you down, and suddenly you have all the time in the world. Don’t be surprised if the holiday gathering, in which you didn’t have time to do whatever it was you wanted to do, becomes a peak experience as you release any concern or apology and focus on being in the moment – being yourself and enjoying those around you.

- ❖ **Pause To Receive** – When we get preoccupied with giving, there’s little time for receiving. This season, take time to sense the beauty all around – bright and colorful light displays, soft, flickering candlelight, sweet, yummy candies and cookies, and excited children poised on the mall-Santa’s knee. Pause often to notice the natural beauty, free for the receiving. Also, this time of year sometimes stirs up sadness over not having our expectations met. Memories from unhappy holidays of the past or thinking about unfulfilled dreams can stimulate a sense of holiday blues. Again, the best thing to do is to pause and receive these feelings– they are merely transient emotions passing through. They are not you – you are divine! Sometimes they stay for a minute, sometimes an hour, maybe even days, but they always leave eventually, and your heart is once again yours, that place where you’re at home with yourself. Take five minutes to write your feelings, releasing any need to edit or hold back. It’s like emptying unpleasant feelings onto the accepting blank page, so you no longer hold them in your head. It works great!
- ❖ **Personal Time** – Squeeze in some personal time every day. You’ll feel energized and focused. Your brain and your body will be centered, and you’ll get more done in a more timely way. You’ll avoid unnecessary mistakes that waste your precious time. Learn from Gandhi, who is rumored to have said, “[I have so much to do today, I must meditate two hours instead of one”. It’s amazing how a brief walk, a five-minute meditation, or a pause to witness the setting sun can enrich one’s day. In the end, investing five to ten minutes in yourself twice a day will do wonders in doubling your time and energy.

- ❖ **Permission To Ask For Help** – Give yourself permission to ask for help whether it's asking your spouse to pick up some gifts, your children to pick up the house, or your friends to look beyond the messy kitchen. Yes, so many of us have high expectations for ourselves and only ask for help as a last resort. This Year, slide “asking for help” to one of the top three items on your list – ask your family and friends to be part of a team that creates a shared experience from beginning to cleanup. May this holiday season find you loving yourself, your family, your home, your cooking, and your gifts just the way you – and they – are.

Happy Holidays to you all...

Linda