

## Coping with Holiday Stress

By: Clare Gruszka, M.A.

The holidays can be an exciting and joyful time of year. For many, however, this time of year can also be filled with stress. Signs of stress many include feeling cranky, on edge, worried, and in some cases, depressed. Some people may also have difficulty sleeping, headaches, muscle tension, fatigue, or stomachaches. So, how can you reduce stress, stay healthy, and make the most of the holiday season?

The following are conscious steps you can take to make your holidays as stress-free and enjoyable as possible!



### Take time for yourself.

During the holidays, there is often pressure to do for others. However, you will be able to cope with stress better, achieve your goals, and stay healthy if you take care of yourself. Take a long walk, listen to soothing music, or read a good book. Find something that reduces stress and clears your mind. Remember to get plenty of sleep, physical activity, and

eat regular meals. Practice relaxation exercises such as stretching, deep breathing, yoga, or meditation. Spending just 15 minutes engaging in a stress-free activity can make a difference!

### Set realistic expectations.

We often have higher expectations for the holiday season than any other time of year. Yet, the holidays will never be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions will change as well. Be flexible and creative in keeping old traditions and including new ones. Also, don't expect family problems to disappear just because it is the holiday season. Try to accept family members and friends as they are and set aside discussion of conflicts until a more appropriate time.

### Acknowledge your feelings.

If you have experienced a loss, life adjustment, or can't be with loved ones, realize that it is normal to feel sadness. Give yourself permission to cry or express your feelings. Telling yourself that you "should" feel happy just because it is the holidays will only cause you more despair. Don't isolate yourself and spend time with people who care about you.

### Set boundaries.

Remember that it is okay and healthy to say "no" sometimes. Pick and choose what you want to do, rather than what you think others expect you to do. Set priorities and don't try to accomplish everything at once. Don't hesitate to ask others for help with chores and other tasks—remember you don't have to do everything by yourself!

### Simplify and use moderation.

Overindulgence in food, drink, and spending is common during the holidays. This will only lead to greater stress and guilt. Eat and drink in moderation, while maintaining a healthy diet and exercise routine. Set a budget for holiday spending and stick to it. Remember what's important about the holidays and challenge yourself to appreciate the present moment and time spent with family and friends.

### Seek professional help.

Despite our best efforts, many of us may find ourselves persistently overwhelmed by holiday stress. If you find that you are sad or anxious most of the time, or are unable to function day to day, seeking professional help may be useful. Speaking with a counselor who can help you to manage emotions and find new ways to cope with holiday stress. If you are interested in speaking with a mental health professional, contact the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047 for more information.

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# Monthly Guidance

Dear MG,

In the last few years I've noticed that I tend to get more sad and "down" during the winter months, especially on those days when the sun doesn't come out. Is it possible that my mood could be affected by the weather?

Sincerely,

Winter Blues

Dear WB,

That is a wonderful question and one that many people ask about! Although the winter months are typically associated with positive, happy, and cheerful qualities, it is still possible that we are



affected by the weather around us.

According to research, there is a common type of depression called Seasonal Affective Disorder (also known as SAD) that occurs for about 2.4% of the population. One study showed that SAD is often undiagnosed or misdiagnosed in many individuals.

The symptoms you seem to be experiencing are consistent with winter SAD, but it is also possible to experience summer SAD during the warmer months. There is detail information about each form of SAD in the website of American Psychological Association ([www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)).

If you are struggling with feelings of sadness, experiencing being more tired than usual, or other symptoms consistent with depression, you may benefit from learning some coping skills through counseling or using light therapy (phototherapy) by contacting your physician.

Many of the counselors at the Ball State University Practicum Clinic are trained to work with clients who struggle with depression and changes in mood. Whether or not the winter and lack of light contributes to these "down" feelings, counselors can help reduce those depressed feelings that affect your day to day life.

Monthly Guidance [MG] is here to answer questions about relationships and personal issues. If you would like to ask MG a question, you may call the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic and leave an anonymous message for MG. Or, you may send your question in writing to the address on the back page of this newsletter. If you choose to ask MG a question, the identity of the person submitting the question will remain completely anonymous. Please keep in mind when writing your questions that space is limited. Due to time constraints, MG cannot answer all questions, but will try to choose questions that are representative of a broad range of issues. If your question does not get answered and you would like to discuss it, please call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047. Please be advised that MG is neither a crisis/emergency service nor a correspondence therapy service. If you need either immediate attention or ongoing therapy, call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047.

## Featured Youth Issue: Kids & The Winter Blues

By: Andrew Brimhall, M.A.

Did you know that the change in season can affect a child's mood and behavior? Just like adults, children are susceptible to the "winter blues." There are many reasons this time of year can affect the way we feel. How will I know when my child has winter blues?

Children are not always like adults and may have different ways of showing when they are feeling down. Look for changes in six different areas that may indicate your child is feeling down this winter:

- **Sleeping:** is he/she having a harder time waking up in the morning? Does he/she have a harder time falling asleep?
- **Eating:** Look for any noticeable changes in appetite.

- **Irritability:** It can be difficult to understand why a teen is irritable, but one explanation might be the "winter blues."
- **Low Energy:** If your child complains of being extra tired it might be more than just sleep he/she needs.
- **Withdrawal:** Is your child less friendly in the winter? If your child isn't talking to friends and family as much as they used to, they may be feeling down.
- **Sadness:** When children are sad, sometimes times they appear angry rather than sad.



If you have noticed a few of these changes in your child during the winter. The best thing for the winter blues is physical activity. Sometimes it's hard to find high-energy activities to do in the winter, nevertheless, getting a little physical exercise releases chemicals called endorphins that tell our brains to be happy.

Some scientists have suggested daily solar therapy. That means soaking up some sun for a certain amount of time per day. If we're looking for more physical activity and sunshine, it might be a good idea to spend some time outside as often as possible. It isn't always realistic for your child to play outside in the cold, and there often is not enough sunshine to make a difference. Try to keep the energy level up inside your home. Don't let the energy at home go down with the sun. Having family activities indoors can go a long way on a cold dark night.

# Featured Mental Health Issue:

## All About Generalized Anxiety Disorder

By: Aaron Esche, M.A.

Do you consider yourself a worrier? Do you feel keyed up and unable to relax? It is normal to feel these feelings at one point or another in life, but for some people these feelings stick around for a long time and keep coming back. Some people even feel these negative feelings without being able to identify a cause. If you have had these feelings on most days for longer than six months, you might have what is called Generalized Anxiety Disorder or GAD.

### What causes GAD?

It is true that GAD can run in families, but no one knows for sure why some people have it while others do not. GAD often starts during the teenage years or young adulthood, and the symptoms usually get worse during times of stress.

Symptoms of anxiety include

- Feeling restless or feeling keyed up or on edge
- Being easily fatigued
- Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank

- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Trouble falling asleep or having restless, unsatisfying sleep



Again, GAD is tricky because you might not be able to tell where the worry comes from. You might even worry about how much you worry! If you think you might have GAD, you are not alone. The National Institute of Mental Health reports that 3 out of every 100 people over the age of 18 will have GAD at some point during any given year. That is a lot of people, but there is help available to you!

### Help is available!

Contact the Ball State Practicum Clinic at 285-8047 to obtain more information or set up a counseling appointment.

Research shows that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Behavioral Therapy work well for a lot of people with GAD. Basically, these types of therapies will help you learn to change the way you think and act so you can start feeling more comfortable. Several counselors at the Ball State Practicum clinic are available and practice Cognitive Behavioral Therapies.

### What else can you do?

There are other things you can do on your own to make the symptoms more tolerable. It has been shown that regular aerobic exercise eases a lot of the symptoms of GAD. Other people have had success after learning various relaxation techniques like deep breathing and meditation. Your counselor at the Ball State Practicum Clinic can help teach you these ways to help you feel less anxious and feel better!

## WE ARE MOVING!!!

### The Ball State Practicum Clinic is Moving!!!

Over the last year, our clinic as been getting a full makeover and renovation. Easier access, brand new counseling rooms, same great staff and counselors!

Beginning at the start of Spring Semester 2014, we will be located, once again, in Teacher's College at the intersection of Riverside Avenue and McKinley Avenue.

Parking is located behind the building.



The clinic is in the basement—just take the stairs or elevators down to the lower level.

The clinic will be closed for semester break and will reopen January 13, 2014.

Give the clinic a call at 285-8047 for more information about the move, our hours, directions, and parking.

Clinic staff and counselors are excited about our brand new facility and welcome you to make an appointment to see the new, improved Ball State Practicum Clinic!

# Featured Counselor Profile

## Claire Kubiesa, M.A.

By: Erin Sadler, M.A.

*This column is a way for the community to learn about the diverse talents, both master's and doctoral students, employed at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic.*

Claire Kubiesa is currently a first-year doctoral student in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services. She is currently seeing clients at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic. The following is a discussion with Claire, one of the many talented individuals employed at the Ball State University Practicum Clinic.

### **How did you decide to pursue your PhD in Counseling Psychology?**

I earned my Bachelors of Business Administration in Marketing and Psychology and went straight into the business world. I first worked for the BMW Championship, a Professional Golf Association tournament, where I was exposed to professional golfers and a few of their psychologists - I thought to myself, "I would love to do that!" That experience really got my head and heart turned back to psychology. After working in marketing and sales for a few years, I decided that I really enjoyed meeting new people and talking to them about their lives versus pushing product or making a sale. Thus, I made my decision to pursue psychology further and earned my Master's degree in psychology.

### **What are your clinical interests?**

My primary interests fall within the areas of sport and performance, rehabilitation, and health psychology. I am interested in working with all types of athletes and performers (from artists to business people) to help enhance performance, individuals

with disabilities, and individuals affected by illness or injury.

### **Are you currently doing any research?**

I am currently involved with a disability research team made up of doctoral, masters and undergraduate students here at Ball State. Our work involves investigations into experiences of individuals with disabilities.

### **What has been your most influential (or exciting, or enjoyable) work experience?**

One experience that really sticks out to me that got the sport and rehabilitation ball rolling for me was my time working for the Chicago District Golf Association (CDGA). At the CDGA I worked exclusively with their non-profit foundation called the Sunshine Through Golf Foundation (STGF). The mission of the STGF is to provide golf to individuals with disabilities and those that otherwise would not have the access to golf, individuals from 5 to 50+ years old. I spent my summer days organizing, attending, and teaching golf clinics throughout the Chicagoland area, and I could not have had more fun. The most inspiring aspect of working in this setting was the opportunity to observe the athlete's joy, determination, and growth from week to week. To add to this, I am currently working with the BSU Power Soccer Team, and what a fun experience it is! Power Soccer is soccer for power wheelchair users. The joy, determination, and growth is equally echoed in the gym each week we meet for

practice and I could not be more proud to be a part of the team.

### **Are there any populations that you especially enjoy working with in counseling?**

I have found that I like to work with individuals (adolescent to adult) who are interested in improving their performance (be it within sport, theatre, dance, work, school, etc.). I also enjoy working with individuals who have been affected by disability and helping them learn more adaptive coping strategies for dealing with stress.

### **What do you hope to do after you graduate?**

I would ultimately like to work with a professional athletic team, be employed as a sport psychologist/director of sport and performance psychology for a university athletic department, and/or work with the U.S. Paralympics. Endless possibilities!



Claire Kubiesa, doctoral student in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services



# Featured Wellness Issue

## Staying Active for the Winter

By: Sean Jones MA

Winter is here, which means that for many of us it may seem more enticing to warm our hands and feet by the fire than it is to warm up our muscles for a long jog. To add onto this, it is even more difficult to eat healthy when we are constantly surrounded by yummy holiday treats. Do you find yourself wondering how to maintain healthy exercise and eating habits during these chilly months? If so, then you are definitely not alone; however, it is important to maintain a healthy diet and exercise routine for many reasons. Research shows that both eating healthy and exercising relieve stress, fight depression, improve sleep, and can boost your mood and energy.



Here are some tips to keep up an active, healthy lifestyle during the winter months.

- Make exercise a family activity: go for a walk together or even have a dance party in your living room. It may sound silly, but this is a great way to burn calories and have fun with family.
- Pay attention to when you are really hungry. Sometimes it is hard to turn down those

holiday cookies, but if you are not hungry, then try to avoid them.

- Remember that it is okay to treat



yourself! If you deny yourself every tasty treat, you may lose control entirely and stuff yourself the minute you're around food. It's important to balance your diet as you would your bank account. If you eat something unhealthy then you should try to eat something healthy for your next meal. For example, if you had something sweet for breakfast, like chocolate chip pancakes, then for lunch try to eat some veggies and protein.

- Keep moving! Every little bit of movement counts, so even if you can't go for that bike ride you normally enjoy, there are other ways to keep moving. Try parking your car in the back of the parking lot at the grocery store or take the stairs rather than the elevator. If you are sitting at a desk for eight hours a day, make sure to stand up and stretch or walk around the building during your break to move around; you will feel much better!

- Try to eat a little protein with every meal. Protein helps you feel fuller for longer, whereas breads, pastas, and sweets will spike your blood sugar and leave you feeling hungry only hours later. So if you do decide to eat that pumpkin muffin, it would be a good idea to make sure you ate some protein beforehand so you won't be reaching for more muffins hours later.



These tips are good to keep in mind, but the most important tip to remember is to love yourself and avoid beating yourself up. It is important to not stress out if you can't find time to exercise or if you ate too many holiday cookies the night before. Make sure to love yourself, treat yourself, and live a balanced, healthy life.



**Stick to your exercise routine this winter**

## Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic

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# Mind Matters

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**Ball State University  
Counseling Practicum Clinic**  
Phone: (765) 285-8047

**Teacher's College  
Muncie, IN 47303**

**Intersection of Riverside & McKinley**

### We're on the Web!

<http://cms.bsu.edu/Academics/CollegesandDepartments/Teachers/Departments/CounselingPsych/Practicum.aspx>

## Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic: Serving the Community Since 1969

### Mission

- The clinic is a training and research facility for the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services.
- The clinic provides high-quality, low-cost psychological services to the Delaware County community and beyond.

### Service Providers

- Over 50 graduate student counselors under the supervision of faculty.
- Faculty supervisors are licensed psychologists and counselors.

### Services Offered

- Individual Counseling
- Couple Counseling
- Family Counseling
- Child/Adolescent Counseling
- Group Counseling with a focus on:
  - Parenting
  - Social skills
  - Anger control
  - Issues of concern to children and adolescents

### Hours of Operation

- August-May (Spring & Fall)  
9 AM to 9 PM M-Th  
9 AM to 12 PM Fri
- May-August (Summer)  
9 AM to 8 PM M-Th  
Closed on Friday
- The clinic is closed during university vacations and holidays.

*All clients have the right to receive timely, competent counseling services consistent with the ethical principles and guidelines established by professional organizations. All counseling services provided at the Counseling Practicum Clinic are guided by the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the American Counseling Association, the American School Counseling Association, the American Rehab Counseling Association, the General Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services, and the Specialty Guidelines for the Delivery of Services by Counseling Psychologists.*