

Counselor's Corner

"December Dreaming"

I feel like I am in a dream. The weather has been extraordinarily mild for this time of the year, and until last week, I had roses, geraniums, and mums blooming. Frankly, I was shocked when the first snowfall came. I somehow thought things would continue as they had for the last few months in spite of my knowledge and past experience with fall and winter. Now, I realize that time is marching on, the turkey dinner has been eaten, and here we are in the last month of the year. How shall we spend our days in December?

December is an anticipatory month, but it can also be a month of madness, starting with Black Friday, followed by Cyber Monday, and "extended Tuesday". We rush to put our decorations up, write out our cards, bake cookies, and buy just the right presents. Gift-giving means big profits for retailers while it may mean extended spending and credit card debt for consumers. Do we really need all this stuff and all this stress at a time devoted to sharing, caring, and giving? It may be necessary to check our priorities and simplify our lives if our preparations are infringing on our emotional well-being. If we have to ditch our Christmas cards, downsize our trees or gift lists for the sake of peace in and around us, let's do it. Then, we will be free to bask in the real spirit of this season and focus on family.

Recently, I read of a teacher who asked her students to write letters to Santa. It was easy for them to list all the items they hoped the jolly man in the red suit would deliver. Then, the teacher asked the children to write a letter to their parents and ask for something from them. This letter required much more thought, and to the amazement of many, the students did not extend their request for material things. Instead, they wanted parents to spend more time with them, play games with them, tell more stories, and spend less time at work or on the internet and phone. In some cases, there was a plea not to argue during the holidays. These children had real insight into what matters. We all need to follow their wishes and give our children and others more of our time, along with our store bought gifts, wrapped in sparkling papers and bows.

I never wanted summer to end this year, but it did. It always does in Michigan. The seasons of our lives move forward, too. Our children will not remain tiny kids in their Christmas jammies. Our friends and family members will not always be sitting at our dinner tables. We must promise to make the most of each day with those we love. Memories of gifts will fade quickly, but memories of how we treated others and shared our time will always remain.

Diane L. Rivard