



Healthfocus

Best wishes from Healthfocus

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all our patients, referring doctors and all other referrers the very best for the Christmas/ New Year and Summer holidays period and look forward to working with you in 2015.

For those of you who may not have received our last edition of the newsletter we now have a website www.healthfocuspsychology.com.au.

Another app that is now available for download is the headspace meditation app. This includes the classic Take 10 programme and animations, which are free along with additional access if you become a subscriber.

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What makes relationships work?

As we approach Christmas and the New Year holiday period many of the people I see before and after this time either share worry about family relationships, or debrief afterwards about conflicts with family, partners or to a lesser extent with friends. I thought it would be a particularly good time to write about what makes relationships work!

Particularly around this time of the year we turn our attention to the ways that we want to be loved or cared about by our spouses, children, parents and siblings.

Much of the conflict that occurs is due to people feeling that their needs are not being met. That they are not being listened to, or are not receiving the empathy that they expected to.

Also, expectations may be higher and values placed on things that normally may not matter as much.

Nerves may be frazzled from all the shopping and organizing beforehand, possibly the sleep deprivation from kids waking early, along with the combination of alcohol consumption, which being a disinhibitor leads people to say things that they may normally keep to themselves!

So, how can we each relate positively to the people we love? Firstly, it can be useful to communicate some of what you may like, but allow these to be requests rather than demands. If the other person does not understand how important it is to you, be calm and try another way of expressing your request.

Secondly, let go of old (unhelpful) patterns in your relationships: Half the time we can almost have an argument on our own because we predict what the other person is going to do or say beforehand.

Listen, give the person a chance to communicate and relax your frustrations!

Try to be kind and generous and look for kindness and generosity in others. Don't count or compare whether you or they are the most generous one though.

Love tends to develop and magnify when we recognize that kindness and generosity is developing between you and them.

Finally, if it is all becoming overwhelming, slow down, relax, and take some time away to recuperate and restore your emotional energy!

- 1) *Communicate what you would like as a request (not a demand)*
- 2) *Let go of old patterns (in your relationships with your spouse or family)*
- 3) *Be kind and generous, and look for kindness and generosity in others
(praise what you like 😊)*
- 4) *Take some time away from others to relax and unwind as needed*

*Lisa Irving,
Clinical Psychologist/ Principal*

Tips for helping your kids problem solve away from fighting with each other!

Personally, I enjoy this time away from the school routine where there is the race in the morning to take the kids to school, and the holiday period can be more relaxed. However, along with that relaxation can be the problems that can develop with kids on holidays. Here's some ideas of how to keep things running smoothly:

Prepare the kids for the holiday routine, your expectations and the rewards that they can expect for behaving well. These can be fairly simple things, like in our house it's always been a rule that before doing the "fun things" that the kids will be expected to have had breakfast, changed out of their PJ's, and completed any jobs that are expected of them. The "reward" in this instance is that when they ask to be allowed to do something they would like to, the answer is most likely yes. If they are not motivated to progress along with the routine, think of some incentives to motivate them.

In the case of kids becoming grumpy with each other or fighting with each other, do your best to notice what the pattern is around this behaviour? Is it tiredness, competition between them, boredom, a lack of sharing or something else? Whichever it might be, parents can be a good mediator to avoid the conflict from escalating and can facilitate problem solving. This does not mean that you problem solve for them, but rather ask some questions that help them to problem solve.

- 1) Identifying the problem: Ask each of them what happened in front of the other. Each person has their opportunity to speak without being interrupted and to express themselves. If you need to have a "talking object", which when held means that that person has the air time without interruption.
- 2) Correct their negative facial expressions and tones of voices. 90% of what we react to is this, rather than the words that are used. So if your kids are whining or making angry faces, instruct them on how they can express their feelings more positively and/ or teach them about tones and facial expressions. As the parent, we need to keep our tone warm but firm, calming any of our own feelings of exasperation or frustration or your kids will respond to that emotional energy rather than learn to calm themselves. Try not to use guilt.
- 3) Ask them each how they think the other person experienced them. This is to try to develop their empathy.
- 4) Ask them to volunteer ways that they can solve the problem. If they are really stuck you can come up with ideas to help them.
- 5) Let them know what the consequence will be (positive or negative) if their conflictual behaviour continues. Let them know how they will be rewarded if they can get along, e.g. "when you speak warmly to your sister, she wants to help you with things and take turns".
- 6) Start at the first point each time there is a conflict. Once the kids see that you are willing to pick up each problem as it happens (before it has escalated to world war three!) they will learn to problem solve themselves. It is important that they realize it is part of your family culture (to problem solve) so it is good for them to see you using it with your partner/ husband/ wife, such that the whole family agrees it is better to get along!

