February, 2011

Ascension Counseling Center

Nurturing Your Relationship

If January is the month of New Year's Resolutions and New Beginnings, February is the month of Love. It's a good time to take a look at our relationships and begin to nurture them with the attention they deserve. For many of us, our happiness is directly related to how well our romantic or important relationships are going. But sadly, we get so caught up in the busy-ness of every day life that we neglect our relationships and put very little effort into them.

If you want to improve your relationship with your significant other, or if you want to develop a deeper relationship with someone new, try these activities from *The Couple's Comfort Book* by Jennifer Louden. This book is a creative guide for renewing passion, pleasure, and commitment. Many of the most common problems couples have are based on a lack of nurturing. You may not call it that. You may say, instead, "He never talks to me" or "She doesn't appreciate anything I do for her." The solution lies in small acts of appreciation, acceptance, celebration, letting go, and, above all, conscious and constant communication. You can choose to stay connected and conscious, or you can choose what most people choose—to check out.

The activities here are taken from the book and are designed to fit within your busy lives. They can make you feel good, deepen your respect and appreciation for each other, and might just spice up your life.

We all have emotional needs that are crucial to our survival.
~ Jennifer Louden

Recognize What You're Already Doing Well

We tend to ignore the good things about our relationships and focus on the negative aspects. This exercise helps to overcome the obstacles that may be preventing you from noticing your partner's good deeds. For one week, each time your partner does something you consider nurturing, write it down. At the end of the week, take turns expressing your appreciation for each nurturing act that caused you to make a note. (Don't turn this into a competition. Make it a feast of appreciation instead).

Recognize Your Needs

Beyond our physical needs for safety, food, shelter, and rest, we have emotional needs that are just as crucial to our survival. Consider the following list of basic personality needs:

Nurturing Your Relationship (Cont'd)

- To be heard, understood, and known by someone we love
- To be touched
- To be authentically ourselves
- To be supported and nurtured
- To be trusted and trust others
- To be sexual
- To have fun
- To know our life makes a difference and has a purpose
- To be loved!

There are so many moments when we crave connection yet we can't think of anything to do.

You can't fulfill your needs or allow your partner to fulfill them if you don't give yourself permission to have them in the first place. The very word need can stir up uncomfortable, intense reactions. If you don't allow yourself to have needs and take action to meet those needs, you end up more needy. You accuse your partner of not caring for you and your partner keeps saying, "I'll do what you want but what is it you want?" To stop this cycle, affirm to each other that it's ok to have needs. Take turns looking into each other's eyes and saying, "I am willing to have needs. I am willing to let you meet my needs."

One Minute Vacations

When life is too crazy and you find yourself wanting to scream every other sentence, stop blaming each other for the problem and work together to nurture each other. In the moment of stress and disconnection invite each other to take a one-minute holiday. Look into each other's eyes and repeat together, "Everything will be fine." Rub each other's necks for 30 seconds. Give each other a full body hug. Close your eyes and remember a happy moment you shared in the past. Put on a piece of music, hold hands, and do nothing for one song.

Bedtime

Institute a ritual for leaving the day behind. Massage each other's faces, pray together, sit back and breathe deeply together for one minute. Read something beautiful to each other before bed. Visit a bookstore together to find a book that appeals to both of you. Make eye contact, kiss each other, and wish each other good night. One couple found a beautiful box. When they're worried, they get the box, open it, speak their worries into the box (or write them and put them in). Then they close the box and put it outside of the bedroom, and go to sleep. You could also set aside a regular massage night. Prepare the area by straightening up, lowering the lights, and preparing essential oils for massage.

You can buy "The Couples Comfort Book" in stores or online at Amazon.com

Thank You to River Region Master Gardeners & Louisiana Nurseries

Flower Garden

If you've been to our offices lately you've noticed the beautiful pansies and rose bushes that have been planted recently at our front door that have helped us provide a cheery, warm welcome to our visitors. They were planted thanks to the joint efforts of Plantation Region Master Gardeners, led by Barbara McCormick, and of Louisiana Nurseries. The Master Gardeners volunteered their time to plant the flowers and Louisiana Nurseries gave them deep discounts to help them in their mission. The Louisiana Master Gardener Program is a service of the LSU AgCenter. The program is designed to recruit and train volunteers to help meet the educational needs of home gardeners while providing an enjoyable and worthwhile service experience for volunteers.

The Master Gardeners have committed to re-planting our garden each season. Thank you, Barbara, the Plantation Region Master Gardeners, and Louisiana Nurseries for your generosity.

Free Stop Smoking Group

Jackie Powell, Licensed Professional Counselor, Clinical Manager

Our next Smoking Cessation groups in Gonzales and Donaldsonville are forming now. All adults are welcome to these FREE 8 week classes. The Nicotine patch will be supplied free to those who qualify. Participants will receive strategies for quitting and self-help material from a trained clinician.

Recent research shows that tobacco cessation not only reduces the risk of lung cancer but also reduces the risks of coronary heart disease, stroke, peripheral vascular disease, and other types of cancer. You can quit today!

Advanced registration is required because space is limited. Call Jackie at Ascension Counseling at 621-5742 (Gonzales) or 473-8342 (D'ville). This group is sponsored by Capital Area Human Services District, Ascension Counseling Center, and the American Lung Association.

www.AscensionParish.Net

Ascension Counseling Center

1112 So. E. Ascension Complex, Gonzales, LA 70737
419 Memorial Blvd, Donaldsonville, LA 70346

Phone: (225) 621-5775
Fax: (225) 644-3208
E-mail: SHamilton@apgov.us

Helping individuals and families change behaviors, change lives.

Ascension Counseling Center provides comprehensive therapeutic services to individuals and families in an effort to foster healthy coping skills that will improve their quality of life.

Hours

Gonzales:

Business Hours
Mon - Thur: 8 am - 5:30 pm; Fri: 8 am - noon

Counseling Hours
Mon - Thur: 7 am - 8 pm; Fri: 8 am - noon

Psychiatrist Hours
Monday, Tuesday & Thursday: 8 am - 6 pm

Donaldsonville:

Business Hours
Wednesday: 7:30 am - 5:30 pm

Counseling Hours
Wednesday: 7:30 am - 5:30 pm

Psychiatrist Hours
4th Thursday of the Month: 8 am - 11:30 am

Upcoming February Events

Mondays:

- ***Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment group***: 5 - 7 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group***, 4 - 6 pm & 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Women in Recovery***, 4 - 6 pm, Gonzales.

Tuesdays:

- ***Anger Management:*** ongoing, join any time, 4 - 5 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Nurturing Parenting, adult & children groups***: 5 - 7:30 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Smoking Cessation***, 5 - 6 pm, Gonzales.

Wednesdays:

- ***Early Intervention: Toward No Drug (Adolescents),*** 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Early Intervention: Guiding Good Choices (Parents),*** 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment group:*** 2:30 - 4:30 pm, Donaldsonville.
- ***Smoking Cessation***, 10 am, Donaldsonville.
- ***Living Strong Cancer Survivors group***, 3 - 4 pm, Donaldsonville. 2nd Wed of each month.
- ***Free HIV/AIDS testing*** (no blood/no needles), 10 am - 2 pm, Gonzales. 2nd Wed of each month.
- ***Free HIV/AIDS testing*** (no blood/no needles), 10 am - 2 pm, Donaldsonville, 4th Wed of each month.
- ***Grandparents Raising Grandchildren***, 10:30 am - noon, lunch provided, Donaldsonville, 4th Wed of each month.

Thursdays:

- ***Adolescent Right Choices group***, 4 - 6 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Anxiety Reduction group***: 4 - 5 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Psychiatrist in Donaldsonville***, 4th Thurs of each month.