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News  
from  
Phelps  
Memorial  
Hospital  
Center

December 2004

Phelps Today

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# New at Phelps

In keeping with our commitment to change and enhance services in response to the needs of the community, Phelps added a number of new programs in recent months, with plans to offer others in the near future.

*The Cardiovascular Risk Assessment Center*, developed by cardiologist Kenneth Kaplan, MD, offers patients a comprehensive battery of tests to establish risk for developing heart and associated cardiovascular disease. Tests include Carotid Doppler, Stress Echocardiogram, and CT of the coronary arteries for calcium scoring. A complete lipid profile and nutritional counseling are also provided. Results are reported to the patient by a cardiologist on the same day. Testing is appropriate for anyone interested in preventive care who has not had a past cardiac incident. The tests will determine cardiovascular risk before a patient experiences any symptoms and can serve as a guide for making important lifestyle changes. The assessment is generally not covered by insurance, but the results are found to be of great value to patients and their doctors. (914-366-3752)

*The Pediatric Diabetes & Endocrine Center* provides state-of-the-art endocrine care for children and young adults under the direction of Richard A. Noto, MD, who is also Chief of Pediatric Endocrinology at New York Medical College. Dr. Noto and colleagues, Alicia Romano, MD, Mary Beth Damore, MD, Ping Zhou, MD, Linda Do, NP, Mary Ellen Mitchell, NP, and Jeannie Dos Santos, NP offer a multidisciplinary approach to diabetes, and patients benefit from the latest diabetes therapies. The Center also treats children diagnosed with short stature with growth hormone therapy. (914-366-3400)


*The Vein Institute*, under the direction of Board Certified surgeon Michael Gioscia, MD, diagnoses and treats a variety

of vein disorders, principally varicose veins. State-of-the-art minimally invasive procedures using ultrasonographic ablation are used to achieve excellent medical and cosmetic results. (914-366-2770)

*The Institute for Voice & Swallowing Disorders* will be opening soon under the direction of laryngologist Craig Zalvan, MD. Voice disorders in professionals, such as actors and singers, will be treated at the Institute, which will also specialize in voice problems that develop due to atrophy or neurologic problems, as well as laryngeal reflux and throat cancer. For patients diagnosed with swallowing disorders, individualized treatment regimens will be designed for the specific needs of each patient. (914-366-3636)

*The Infusion Center*, under the direction of Richard Parrino, MD, has been expanded to administer *biologics* to patients with chronic diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis. Biologics are derived from living organisms and are designed to inhibit or supplement a specific component of the immune system. Among the most advanced drugs today, biologics are usually administered intravenously. They are used to treat a variety of chronic illnesses that may be painful and debilitating. Dramatic results are often produced, significantly enhancing the patient's quality of life. (914-366-3523)

*Wishing you a healthy, happy holiday season,*

  
C. Edward Midgley  
Chairman, Board of Directors

  
Keith F. Safian, FACHE  
President & CEO

# Stress-less Holidays



The holidays are “the most wonderful time of year,” as the song goes. As families come together to celebrate traditions and bestow gifts upon one another, it is a time full of promise and expectation. Unrealistic expectations, however, are a common source of stress. The social pressure that one is “supposed” to feel bright and merry during the holiday season adds to one's stress; and for those who have experienced loss in one form or another, holidays can be a difficult time. For almost everyone, there is some element of stress involved in preparing for the events of the season.

## *Managing Stress*

Stress is what you feel when the demands upon your life are greater than your ability to meet those demands. Everyone experiences stress differently. What is stressful for one is a welcome challenge to another. One thing is universal — everyone experiences stress, and it isn't possible to make it go away completely. The good news is that you can learn to manage your stress — it just takes time and practice.

*How do you know if you are stressed?* During the hustle and bustle of the holidays, you may be so busy that you don't realize you are stressed. You may not realize that symptoms you are experiencing are signals that your stress response is in full

operation. Signs and symptoms of stress may include sleep difficulties, fatigue, increased anger or frustration, increased anxiety, feelings of sadness, or inability to find time to take care of yourself. Stress may also lead to more frequent illness or attempts to self-medicate with alcohol, prescription drugs, or non-prescription drugs.

You probably already know more than you realize about stress management; but this holiday season, when feelings of stress rise up, why not give yourself a gift — try some of the stress-relievers presented here. You can individualize these techniques for yourself as you become able to recognize your own signs and symptoms and begin to practice stress management.

## *Relaxation Beats Stress*

When you are stressed, a “fight or flight” response goes into effect. Muscles tighten, your adrenaline glands speed up, breathing is more labored, your digestive system malfunctions, and your immune system breaks down. To manage the signal that the stress response is in effect, it is important to know how to call it off. One way to do that is to use the relaxation response. When your body relaxes, your emotions follow suit.

Many relaxation techniques are “portable,” so you can take them with you and use them at any time.

*Visualization* — Imagine yourself at the beach, in the mountains, or in any peaceful surrounding - and take a 5 minute vacation there.

*Deep Breathing* — Benefit from diaphragmatic breathing where only your stomach rises and falls.

*(Continued on Page 14)*

**Office Yoga** — Stretch & bend if you are at work and feeling stressed over all the shopping you have to do!

**Biofeedback** — This technique helps you improve your health by using signals from your body and consciously changing and controlling functions that are normally unconscious, such as breathing and heart rate.

**Progressive Muscle Relaxation**— Tighten and loosen muscles to promote awareness of where tension exists, and relax that area.

## Reassure Yourself

A lot of stress signals develop because of the messages we give ourselves. Unrealistic expectations and negative thinking impact stress and how we look at it. We alarm ourselves with *extreme* thoughts such as, “*This always happens to me,*” and *negative* thoughts such as, “*I’m not good enough for this.*” If we can be aware of the extremes and negatives in our thinking, we can use a dimmer switch approach, where our thinking is more in-between. So, instead of the extreme “*always*” or “*never,*” use the dimmer, “*sometimes.*” Magically, the dimmer changes your attitude. You can reassure yourself by reframing a thought from the negative message to the positive message. Tell yourself the same thing you would tell an anxious child: “*You can do it!*” or “*You will be OK.*”

## Be Assertive

**Assertive behavior** can be used to manage stress. Relaying information, requests, or directions assertively will ensure open, honest, and direct communication that is always clear for the receiver. The assertive person uses “*I*” statements and owns the request, the feedback, or the statement he or she is sending. When you are assertive, you feel better about yourself and your relationships.

There are, however, **behaviors that can contribute to your stress level** rather than helping to manage your stress. During

the holidays, relationships are sometimes strained. Our stress response is always turned on.

The person using **aggressive** behaviors intimidates by using “*you*” statements, by raising their voice, even screaming at the other person. They have no regard for others’ rights and may call them undeserving names or be disrespectful in any number of ways. These are difficult people to have a relationship with. The holidays might be extra lonely for the aggressive-acting person.

On the other hand, the person using **passive** behavior and communication has little regard for their own rights. They are the people-pleasers who put everyone else first at their own expense. This person may end up feeling overwhelmed and angry about not meeting their own needs or be the one we all know at holiday time who does it all—to the point of exhaustion.

The last behavior that is less likely to help manage stress is **passive-aggressive** behavior. Messages from a passive-aggressive person are often confusing. This person uses jokes with an intended message, or sarcasm to make a point. It is never clear what the passive-aggressive person wants from you.

## Don’t Try to be Perfect

As you practice the stress relievers presented here, I wish you only “*moderate*” success — because while practice may make perfect, there is no “*perfect*” when it comes to stress!

**Ginnie Tortoso, LCSW**, is Clinical Trainer and Social Work Supervisor of Phelps’ Behavioral Health Inpatient Units. Ginnie has a private practice in individual and family counseling with the Stress Medicine Group in Briarcliff. Ginnie earned a Masters of Social Work from Fordham University, New York, NY; an MS in Clinical Counseling from CW Post College, Greenvale, NY, and a BA in Sociology from Queens College in Flushing, NY.

# Q & A with Daphne Chivily

## Ostomy Care



### *Q. What is an ostomy?*

*A.* Surgery for colon cancer, diverticulitis, Crohn's disease, or bladder cancer sometimes involves the surgical creation of an opening in the abdominal wall, which is called an ostomy. This "stoma" may be needed only temporarily while internal healing takes place; or if surgery is more extensive, the stoma may be required permanently.

### *Q. Can people tell if someone has an ostomy?*

*A.* If a friend or neighbor has a colostomy or ileostomy, you would not realize it unless you were told. For the patient, however, living with an ostomy can present challenges — both physical and emotional.

### *Q. What is Enterostomal Therapy?*

*A.* "ET" is a specialized field of nursing involving the care of patients with abdominal stomas, dermal wounds, pressure ulcers, incontinence and related skin conditions. An Enterostomal Nurse is specially trained to care for patients who have undergone ostomy surgery.

### *Q. Should all ostomy patients see an Enterostomal Nurse?*

*A.* Ideally, an ostomy patient should visit an ET Nurse prior to surgery or as soon as possible after surgery, and periodically after that. These visits will ensure that proper fitting of the appliance is maintained. Equally important, an ET Nurse can offer support to patients as they become accustomed to lifestyle

changes and help them retain a good self image and confidence for daily living.

### *Q. What types of problems might an Enterostomal Nurse help an ostomy patient avoid?*

*A.* Regular consultations with an ET Nurse can minimize or prevent problems such as peristomal skin breakdown or peristomal hernias. Skin breakdown can be prevented by maintaining a proper fit of the appliance. Peristomal hernias, which also can lead to skin problems, can be addressed by using a hernia support belt or in some cases may require surgical intervention. Early recognition and intervention can minimize skin problems and discomfort. That is why regular visits to an ET Nurse are important.

### *Q. What else can an ET Nurse do to help an ostomy patient?*

*A.* Often, patients experience depression, and it is helpful for them to express their feelings. The Enterostomal Nurse listens to the patient, offers emotional support, and encourages participation in the United Ostomy Association Support Group, which meets at Phelps every third Sunday at 2 p.m., from September - May.

*Daphne Chivily* RNC, MS, CWOCN has been a nurse for 32 years. She graduated as an LPN from Phelps Memorial Hospital Nursing School in 1972, earned an AAN from Dutchess Community College in 1978, and a BS (1984) and MS (1990) in nursing from Mercy College. Daphne attended the WOC education program at Emory University in 1993. She has been practicing as a staff nurse in various roles at Phelps since 1972 and as CNS/CWOCN since 1993. Recognizing the lack of ostomy care services in Westchester, Daphne developed the Ostomy Service at Phelps eleven years ago and has overseen the program since it was established. She may be contacted at 914-366-3395.

# The Flu

Yes, there is a national influenza vaccine shortage this year. But don't worry, you can still fight the flu. Here are some steps you can take to protect yourself and others.

First, know the symptoms of the flu:

- ✓ fever over 100 degrees
- ✓ chills
- ✓ a severe headache
- ✓ muscle aches
- ✓ a cough and sore throat

If you develop flu symptoms, seek medical help and *stay home from work!* Not only will you reduce the chances of spreading your illness to others, you'll get the rest you need to feel better soon.

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## *Your Health is in Your Hands*

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One of the most important things you can do to help stop the spread of germs that cause flu, colds, and other respiratory diseases is to *ALWAYS wash your hands* with soap and hot water, or use a waterless hand cleanser:

- ✓ after blowing your nose
- ✓ whenever you cough
- ✓ after using the bathroom
- ✓ before and after eating
- ✓ after being in contact with or near someone who is ill.

Also be sure to:

- ✓ cover your nose and mouth with a tissue whenever you cough or sneeze
- ✓ dispose of used tissues in the trash.
- ✓ Clean surfaces you touch frequently, such as door knobs, water faucets, refrigerator handles, and telephones.

To fight stress and boost your immune system, get plenty of rest and exercise and eat nutritious foods.

You can be a "health hero" by saving flu vaccines for the peo-

ple who need it most. Priority groups for receiving the vaccine include:

- ✓ all children aged 6-23 months
- ✓ adults aged 65 years and older
- ✓ persons aged 2-64 years with underlying chronic medical conditions
- ✓ All women who will be pregnant during the flu season

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## *What to do if You Get the Flu*

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If despite all efforts, you come down with the flu, take comfort in the knowledge that the worst symptoms will only last 3-4 days. You should recover completely in 7-10 days.

Although a person with the flu feels very sick, it seldom leads to serious complications. Home treatment will help reduce discomfort:

- ✓ take a pain reliever & fever reducer such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen
- ✓ use decongestants and nasal sprays to relieve stuffy nose or relieve pain in the face and behind the eardrum
- ✓ use non-prescription cough medicine
- ✓ drink lots of fluids to replace those lost from fever and ease a scratchy throat
- ✓ avoid smoking or breathing other people's smoke (good advice any time, but particularly when you have a respiratory infection)
- ✓ breathe moist air from a hot shower to clear a stuffy nose
- ✓ get plenty of rest

TAMIFLU is available. If started within the first 48 hours, it can mitigate symptoms. Call your doctor to see if this is appropriate for you.

And don't forget the chicken soup!

Sources: State of New York  
Department of Health and  
<http://my.webmd.com>

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# Sleep Well

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Have you been told that you snore loudly? Do you feel overly tired during the day? These may be clues that you have sleep apnea, a condition in which one stops breathing for short periods of time while sleeping. It is associated with a number of serious medical conditions including hypertension, coronary artery disease, stroke, and motor vehicle accidents.

Snoring occurs when the airway is not fully open, and the noise of snoring comes from the effort to force air through the narrowed passageway. Not all snorers have sleep apnea. A proper diagnosis is essential to rule out this condition.

If you feel you have a sleep problem, you should consult with your primary physician, who will decide if a sleep evaluation would be appropriate.

## A Quick Self-Test

If you check “yes” to two or more of these questions, you may be at risk for sleep apnea:

- Do you snore no matter what position you sleep in?
- Does your sleepmate tell you that you stop breathing when you snore?
- Have you awakened suddenly gasping for breath?
- Does snoring sometimes require you and your partner to sleep separately?
- Are you tired even though you sleep through the night?
- Do you fall asleep at inappropriate times?
- Do you fall asleep while driving?
- Do you have high blood pressure?
- Are you overweight?
- Do you notice a decrease in your sex drive?
- Have you or your family noticed changes in your personality?

For information or to make an appointment for a sleep study at *The Center for Sleep Disorders* at Phelps, call 914-333-5813.

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# Screening Success

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Every September since 1987, Dr. Arno Housman and Dr. Jack Hershman have offered free prostate cancer screenings to men in our community. This year, 282 men were screened. Twenty-two were found to have clinical problems, and they were provided with appropriate education and referrals.

Providing information and referrals to the 22 men who had symptoms will help ensure that they get early evaluation and any needed treatment. Just as important, the 260 men whose screenings did not detect any problems also benefitted, because it set their minds at ease. And they know they can come back each year to find out if anything has changed.

Similarly, each spring, Dr. Rhonda Berkowitz, Dr. Jerome Felsenstein, and Dr. Jeffrey Sturza conduct free skin cancer screenings. Their detection of conditions as serious as malignant melanoma has saved lives.

The reason that these and many other Phelps physicians are so generous with their time is because they realize how important it is to detect disease at an early stage when it is very treatable. They know that their findings could save lives and improve quality of life.

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*Our Physicians' dedication is extraordinary*

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It is the Hospital's mission to improve the health of the community, and one important way we do this is through free educational seminars and health screenings.

We could not offer so much to the community without the willingness of the physicians who give their time and expertise to provide these programs. Their dedication is truly extraordinary.

# Coping with Grief

## *Peace & Hope During the Holidays*



*Sharing memories and feelings with others brings strength to all.*

Thanksgiving, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, Christmas...Holidays are full of happy memories for most people, but for some, happiness is dulled by the pain and sorrow of experiencing holidays without a loved one who has died. The first holiday after such a loss may be particularly difficult, bringing on feelings of loneliness and occasional despair.

To cope, it helps to recognize that this year will be different, and it is okay to not do everything you usually would do.

- Try to set realistic expectations for yourself.
- Anticipate situations that might be painful or uncomfortable, and prepare for them — or avoid them.
- Take care of yourself and try to be flexible. It is alright to change your mind at the last minute about attending a social engagement, or to leave early. Be easy on yourself.
- Express your feelings. Sharing the vulnerabilities of your emotions with others who are grieving brings strength to all.
- Don't be afraid to tell friends and relatives that you would appreciate help with shopping, entertaining, cooking, or cleaning. They probably want to help but don't know how.
- Notice your needs and honor them. Get the rest, nourishment, and affection you need.

- Choose what's best for you: to be with people or to spend time alone, to be immersed in the holiday spirit or not.
- It's okay not to enjoy the holidays . . . and if you find yourself having a good time, that's okay too.
- If old traditions are too painful, try celebrating the holidays in a new way. Involve your family or friends in creating new rituals that include memories of your loved one, such as lighting a candle, cooking your loved one's favorite dish, displaying photos, writing poems, or drawing pictures.

Tap into the wisdom and strength deep within and realize that you can survive this season.

*Bess Steiger, CSW, a graduate of Hunter College School of Social Work, has been a Certified Social Worker since 1986. She has worked in the fields of child welfare, maternal/child health, medical social work, and with the blind and visually impaired. Bess has been with Phelps Hospice for over eight years as bereavement coordinator and social worker.*

*Joyce Bluestone, CSW has been a Certified Social Worker since 1982. For the last ten years, she has worked as both a Hospice social worker and bereavement therapist. She is a faculty member at Fordham University teaching Social Work Practice and classes in Death and Dying.*

*Phelps Hospice Bereavement Support program offers a range of support services to families of Hospice patients and to anyone in the community coping with loss and grief. We offer support groups, short-term individual and family counseling, workshops, memorial services, information, and referrals. All our services are free (or with a suggested donation) and confidential. For information, call (914) 366-3325.*