



# Pacific Connections

Newsletter for past clients and friends

Summer 2012

## Christmas in **Recovery** - Surviving the Silly Season in Sobriety & Serenity

Tracey Hammett,  
Program Director



### **M**aking Christmas Mine!

This time of year often brings many challenges for people in early recovery. Facing the full force of our family of origin dynamics, with only a short walk on Recovery Road behind us, can be a time filled with triggers and challenges that can put us on that slippery slope toward relapse in the blink of an eye! For most of us it's not a matter of asking whether you have issues about Christmas, but more a question of what your issues about Christmas are!



During your treatment at SPP you will have explored the values, beliefs and dynamics of the family you grew up in. Getting your history straight and modifying your values and beliefs to more accurately reflect your adult personal choices and goals helps you create a path that will bring you the hope, health and happiness of a well-lived life, filled with purpose, meaning and achievement.

So let's first look at what some of the challenges may be this Christmas, and then explore some strategies for coping with these challenges effectively to help create a Christmas and New Year experience that brings meaning, healing and happiness into our lives.

Over page is a simple table that lists some of the common concepts associated with Christmas.

Read the list through first then think about each item for a moment, imagine discussing or debating it with friends or relatives, and take a moment to tune into the feelings that come up, and the degree of intensity you have about the issue.

This will differ for everyone - someone in recovery from alcoholism will be challenged by some aspects of the Christmas experience, while someone addressing their perfectionism and control issues will be impacted by others.

While identifying the individual emotions is important, the point of this exercise is to increase awareness about the degree of energy or intensity that we have about these Christmas issues, which is often minimized, ignored, discounted or suppressed, and which can be a set up for an upset on Christmas Day!

Continued...

**Tick the box that reflects the degree of intensity that you feel or sense that could be there for you. Take this opportunity to begin to map out just where some of the challenges may present for you this year. How strong, or intense, are the feelings that come up?**

| <b>Christmas concepts</b>                                      | Calm | Mild intensity | Moderate intensity | High intensity |
|--|------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Pre-Christmas social gatherings                                |      |                |                    |                |
| Preparation and planning for Christmas                         |      |                |                    |                |
| Christmas cards, present planning and buying                   |      |                |                    |                |
| Family expectations at Christmas                               |      |                |                    |                |
| Christmas Eve and/or Christmas Day rituals                     |      |                |                    |                |
| The role of Santa (for your kids or in your childhood)         |      |                |                    |                |
| Receiving and giving of gifts                                  |      |                |                    |                |
| Christmas dining and drinking rituals                          |      |                |                    |                |
| Family dynamics at Christmas                                   |      |                |                    |                |
| Togetherness, belonging, separation and aloneness at Christmas |      |                |                    |                |
| The demands of Christmas                                       |      |                |                    |                |
| Spirituality and religion at Christmas                         |      |                |                    |                |
| The joy of Christmas   |      |                |                    |                |

The ticks that you have placed in the moderate and high boxes indicate just where you may have to pay some extra attention, or approach with caution, as the Christmas season nears. Take some time to set yourself up for success this year. The table below provides a range of strategies that may support you in creating the Christmas experience you hope for:

**1. Plan ahead** - What would your ideal Christmas celebration look like? What do you need to do to create a great Christmas?

**2. Have a proactive attitude** - How are you going to set yourself up to make this Christmas work for you? What attitude adjustments are needed? (Yours not others since we can only change ourselves!)

**3. Take opportunities** - Accept invitations, volunteer, go to meetings, enjoy solitude, work if that works for you

**4. Embrace spiritual concepts** - What spiritual concepts can you bring into Christmas: generosity, compassion, acceptance, surrender, abundance

**5. Maintain a therapeutic focus** - How do my Christmas issues relate to my core issues: How would someone who is anti-dependent be likely to approach Christmas, or someone who has low self-esteem, or feels compelled to create the perfect Christmas?

**6. Practice boundaries!!!** - Say yes when you mean yes, and no when you mean no. Focus on self-containment and self-protection

**7. Own your reality** - Take the opportunity to tune in and explore your own values, beliefs, wants, needs, and attitudes about the meaning and purpose of Christmas. Respect the same for others

**8. Embrace your inner child!** - Explore how the different ego states (WC, AAC, FA) see and experience Christmas

**9. Enjoy giving and receiving** - Give with generosity of spirit and receive with humility and gratitude

**10. Be creative** - Organise an online Christmas via Skype, or an orphans Christmas gathering

**11. Do something different** - Travel somewhere new and exciting, or come for a working holiday in treatment at SPP if times are tough!

**12. Honour the moment** - Reflect on Christmas's of the past, and consider Christmas's of the future, then let go and just focus on being in the now of this Christmas

Christmas in Recovery can be a beautiful experience filled with joy, wonder, celebration and meaning. We would love to hear some stories about how you made Christmas special for yourself this year...

## “I’m Chris and I’m an alcoholic”: Christopher Kennedy Lawford attends Testimonial Ceremony

We were lucky to have Mr Christopher Kennedy Lawford, Author, Activist and Actor, attend our testimonial ceremony on 5 November.

As he happily admits, Mr Lawford was born into privilege. His father – Peter Lawford – was a member of the “Rat Pack” while his mother – Patricia Kennedy - was from a well-known family called the Kennedys.

At a young age he was exposed to drugs, both in his family and through his friends. Knowing deep down that drugs and alcohol were not good for him, he always said “no”. After witnessing the public murder of his Uncle, Robert Kennedy, one day he stopped saying “no” and said “yes”. It was poignant that Mr Lawford mentioned these traumatic events given that we know addiction is often a symptom of deeper underlying issues.

Mr Lawford reflected on his life in a moving speech that talked about his struggle with addiction. Mr Lawford reiterated to the audience that recovery is a journey, rather than a destination. “Out in the real world people are like really? Alcoholism? Drugs? Can’t you just stop?” he added “Can you just stop having cancer or diabetes?”. Mr Lawford reminded us that addiction is a brain disease not bad behaviour or a moral failing as is often the public’s perception.

In a conversation he had with Betty Ford CEO, John Schwarzlose, Mr Lawford asked “So what is the real deal on outcomes?”. Mr Schwarzlose responded “A third, a third, a third”. Mr Lawford

clarified; “A third will die, a third will come back, and a third will get sober”. Mr Lawford emphasised that life in recovery is a day-to-day battle that takes courage.

Mr Lawford said he had no regrets about his life or his journey to recovery and left us with a quote from Aldous Huxley, “Experience is not what happens to you; it’s what you do with what happens to you”.



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### CONSULTANT PROFILE

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## Pia Mellody

Pia Mellody, Senior Clinical Advisor for **The Meadows** and Clinical Consultant for **Mellody House and Dakota**, is known and respected as a preeminent authority, lecturer and educator in the fields of addictions and relationships. Her work in codependence, boundaries, and the effects of childhood trauma on emotional development has profoundly influenced the



treatment of addictions and issues around forming and maintaining relationships. She is the author of several extraordinary books, including *Facing Codependence*, *Facing Love Addiction* and her latest book, *The Intimacy Factor*.

As one of the pioneers in the field of recovery, she developed theories on the effects of childhood trauma that became the foundation for The Meadows’ programs and are, in large measure, the reason for its success.

Much of her work at The Meadows, a multi-disorder facility specializing in the treatment of trauma and addictions, includes counseling with staff and individual patients. A highly acclaimed lecturer, she maintains a schedule of speaking engagements and training workshops throughout the world.

It is Pia’s model of Development Immaturity that forms the basis of the treatment program at South Pacific Private and we are delighted to have her as a consultant.

# Mental as Anything

Mental illness is still a mystery in the modern day workforce... If a team member gets physically sick you take physical action. If someone gets the flu – you do something - send them home, ban them from the office, give them sick days or plan to get flu shots for your team preceding the following winter! If they cut their finger – you give them a band aid. We look at physical health support such as massage therapists, personal trainers, corporate fitness training. Dieticians/ gym membership and other physical health support in the workplace – what do you do to support good mental health?

So few employers disregard the impact of poor mental health and do nothing. The Australian Human Rights Commission have estimated that around 45% of Australians aged between

16 and 85 will experience a mental illness at some point in their life. I have recruited over 1800 people over the last 18 years in my recruiting career and not once have I read a letter of offer, with a clause providing time for mental health leave – only sick leave is noted. Nor have I ever read clauses for support for a mental illness or mental health.

In order for the workplace to start to take steps to de-stigmatise mental health and allow help to be available when needed, I believe we need to make little steps and provide simple tools and assistance to support staff that we may be unaware need mental health support.

Recently I was at Lifeline fund raising luncheon and the Patron, John Brogden, reminded us of the horrifying statistics:

## How common is mental illness?

It is estimated that a GP who sees 40 patients a day can expect that between eight and ten (20 – 25%) of these patients will require support or treatment for anxiety or depression



Mental health problems are the third biggest health problem in Australia, after heart disease and cancer

Depression is currently the leading cause of non-fatal disability but only three per cent of Australians identify it as a major health problem.



Suicide is the highest cause for death for males under 45 and women under 35 in Australia

It is often presumed that a worker's mental illness develops outside of the workplace. However, an 'unhealthy' work environment or a workplace incident can cause considerable stress and exacerbate, or contribute to, the development of a mental illness.

Grief is a process that all people will experience at many points in their life. Grief can be loss of a loved one, change of circumstance - (such a house

move, demotion or divorce) or even grief for a change in a life stage. Repressed grief can also cause dysfunctional behavior. Employers should be aware of employees experiencing grief and acknowledgement plus offers for support can go a long way to making a workplace more supportive.

Providing a healthy and safe workplace benefits all workers, including those with mental illness. It also makes good business sense.

A total of 3.2 days per worker are lost each year through workplace stress



Stress-related workers' compensation claims have doubled in recent years, costing over \$10 billion each year

Preliminary research shows that Australian businesses lose over \$6.5 billion each year by failing to provide early intervention/treatment for employees with mental health conditions.

Some recent Harvard Health Publications have written some great literature on mental health problems in the workplace suggesting that the personal toll on employees — and the financial

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cost to companies — could be eased if a greater proportion of workers who need treatment were able to receive it. The authors of such studies advise employees and employers to think of mental health care as an investment — one that is worth the up-front time and cost.

Most of the research on the costs and benefits of treatment has been done on employees with depression. The studies have found that when depression is adequately treated, companies reduce job-related accidents, sick days and employee turnover, as well as improve the number of hours worked and employee productivity.

Studies such as these suggest that, in the long term, costs spent on mental health care may represent an investment that will pay off — not only in healthier employees, but also for the company's financial health. It is clear that the cost of ignoring the problem is far greater than the cost of developing and implementing strategies to create a safe and healthy workplace. So as employers let's start to think of ways to provide support in the work force and talk openly about mental health. Some ways that we can do this are:

- Provide and note time for mental health days and include these in sick leave entitlements on letters of offer
- Make available mental health counselling
- Supportive grief counselling and support
- Links to the key available support services in your company intranet and in-house resource tools, such as Beyond Blue and RUOK websites
- Simply talking openly about these services and be supportive to those that may need this help is a step in the right direction and starts to remove the past stigmatisation around this issue.

When it comes to mental health situations in the workplace - ignorance is not bliss!

Written by Simone Allan, Director at Mondo Search and reproduced with permission"

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## ARTICLE

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# The Price of "Nice"

Nice behavior eventually has a "price" for both the "nice" person and the person or persons involved with him. It is alienating, indirectly, hostile, and self-destructive because:

The "nice" person tends to create an atmosphere such that others avoid giving them honest, genuine feedback. This blocks their emotional growth.

"Nice" behavior will ultimately be distrusted by others. That is, it generates a sense of uncertainty and lack of safety in others, who can never be sure if they will be supported by the "nice" person in a crisis situation that requires an aggressive confrontation with others.

A "nice" person stifles the growth of others. They avoid giving others genuine feedback and they deprive others of a real person to assert against. This tends to force others in the relationship to turn their aggression against themselves. It also tends to generate guilt and depressed feelings in others who are intimately involved and dependent on them.

Because of their chronic "niceness", others can never be certain if the relationship with a "nice" person could endure a conflict or sustain an angry confrontation, if it did occur spontaneously. This places great limits on the potential extent of intimacy in the relationship by placing others constantly on their guard.

"Nice" behavior is not reliable. Periodically, the "nice" person explodes in unexpected rage and those involved with them are shocked and unprepared to cope with it.

The "nice" person, by holding their aggressions in, may pay a physiological price in the form of psychosomatic problems and a psychological price in the form of alienation.

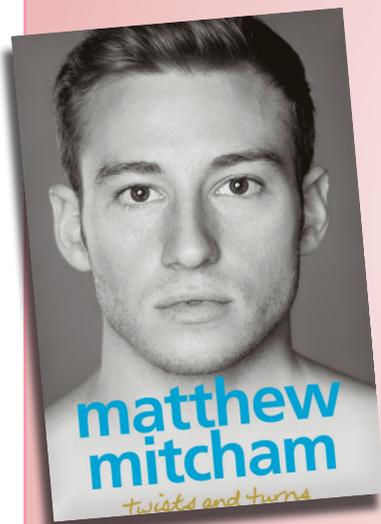
"Nice" behavior is emotionally unreal behavior. It puts severe limitations on all relationships, and the ultimate victim is the "nice" person themselves.

## Twists and Turns

by Matthew Mitcham

288 pages, RRP \$17.89 US

Matthew Mitcham had Australia bursting with pride when at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games he performed the single greatest dive in Games history, winning the Olympic gold medal and dashing China's hopes of a clean sweep.



In his book "Twists and Turns", Matthew reflects upon his life growing up in Queensland, born to a young naïve mum and a father he wouldn't meet until much later in life. Matthew writes poignantly about a simple yet happy childhood, with a stubborn mother and a doting grandmother.

As a child Matthew was somewhat of a loner, opting to spend much of his time doing backflips on a rusty trampoline gifted to him by his grandfather's younger girlfriend. It was this throwaway gift that sparked his life-long and ultimately life-changing love affair with gymnastics. After boasting a dizzying 13 consecutive backflips on the trampoline, fearing he might break his neck, his grandmother swiftly signed him up for professional lessons.

Learning the finesse and fine form he became so well known for, at an early age, Matthew was well and truly en route to Olympic glory. Soon enough Matthew found himself competing as a trampolinist, in a purple velvet leotard made lovingly by his grandmother. Matthew enjoyed many a success as a

trampolinist and reflects fondly on trampolining as his first true love. It wasn't until after the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games that Matthew made the decision to pursue diving.

Matthew's journey is at times confronting. He writes of the thick fog of depression that plagued his mother that also cast its shadow on Matthew. Often an awkward teenager, Matthew struggled with his sexuality and place in the world. Training as a diver was demanding and he often resented the pressure and responsibilities. As his depression advanced into self-harming, Matthew soon turned to drugs and alcohol as a way of escaping his reality.

After hitting rock bottom in 2011, Matthew found himself checking into South Pacific Private. Though amongst his darkest days, Matthew was ready to turn his life around.

Matthew speaks with wisdom about his time here and really illustrates the major life-changes and 'eureka' moments that he had during his treatment. He speaks fondly of one Family program writing that it was then that he really thrived "It was as if the blinkers had been removed from my eyes. Having been emotionally numb for some time, the dam of all my constrained emotions suddenly burst".

It is hard to believe that Matthew is only 24, and clichéd as it may be; he shows wisdom beyond his years. The ability to talk openly about his struggle with alcohol and drugs took courage and strength. Matthew's story is an inspiring read. His ability to rise above personal struggles, seek treatment, and then share his story publicly is admirable. We can all learn something from Matthew's story and it is likely we can all relate in some way or another too.

We here at SPP thank Matthew for telling his story and wish him all the best for whatever the future holds.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Open over Christmas

Congratulations on choosing 2012 to be the year that you have taken that first step in creating the life that you wish for! We at South Pacific Private believe that entering treatment is the greatest gift that we can give our self so we figure you are way ahead in the Christmas spirit of giving!

However Christmas can be a difficult time of year for people in early Recovery and we would like to reassure you that we are here over the Christmas and New Year season to help you through if you have the need.

South Pacific Private is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

# SPP Programs

SPP offers a range of programs for your continuing care. You may like to consider the following programs as a part of your ongoing Recovery.

## Changes 2

Reinforcing your road to recovery. "Changes 2" follows on from "Changes 1". The road to recovery is reinforced by increasing self awareness by exploring the underlying causes and healing pathways for current problems you are experiencing in your life.

Create positive change through self-awareness, education, emotional work and relationship skill development.

**When:** Monday, 18 February - Friday, 22 February  
Monday, 29 April - Friday, 3 May  
Monday, 24 June - Friday, 28 June  
Monday, 19 August - Friday, 23 August  
Monday, 9 December - Friday, 13 December

## Family Education & Support Group

At SPP we believe that the more informed you are, the easier it is to make decisions that will be of practical support to your friend, family member, or even yourself, in dealing with the issues associated with addiction, depression and anxiety. Our Family Education & Support Group runs for 2 hours every Tuesday evening. Over the course of 4 weeks you will have the opportunity to:

- Learn to effectively support someone struggling with addictions or mood disorders.
- Find support and discussion with other people struggling with the same problems.
- Learn more about addictions and mood disorders, and the underlying issues.

**When:** Tuesdays evenings, 5.00pm - 7.00pm

There is a cost of \$50 per session.

## Lifeskills Program

Learn the skills of mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation and interpersonal effectiveness to help manage issues associated with emotional stability, interpersonal chaos, self disorganisation, impulsive behaviours or cognitive difficulties.

**When:** Thursdays, 9.00am - 3.00pm  
7 February - 4 April  
2 May - 20 June  
18 July - 5 September  
10 October - 28 November

## Program Enquiries

With all of these programs, it will be necessary for our Assessment Team to determine whether they are appropriate for you.

To enquire please call  
1800 063 332.

Some of these programs may be covered by your private health insurance.



## Mastering Moods Program

This program explores the triggers of depression and anxiety, and introduces coping skills to master moods, and get order back in your life. Through group and individual exercises, participants will learn mood management skills aimed at boosting motivation, explore thinking processes associated with mood difficulties, acquire self-assertiveness, problem solving and conflict resolution skills, and ways to manage stress and anxiety so they have a renewed sense of competence, confidence and autonomy in their daily life.

**When:** Wednesdays, 10.00am - 4.00pm

## Transition Evening Program

This program is designed to support clients in transitioning from the structured therapeutic environment of South Pacific Private to self managed care during the first few weeks after discharge from the Primary Inpatient Program.

Clients will be supported to address issues arising as they reengage with their home and work environments, focusing on reinforcing and extending the Recovery skills they learnt during their initial phase of Treatment at South Pacific Private.

**When:** Tuesdays, 6.00pm - 9.30pm

## Relapse Prevention Program

This program supports people in committing to recovery by following through with their relapse prevention plan. The group provides them with the skills and ideas to support early to medium term recovery. They explore the triggers for the addictive behaviour, the temptations that are likely to lead to relapse, and preventative solutions for each scenario. Issues of over-confidence, control, resentment and anger are addressed.

Participants gain an understanding of the benefits of recovery, and how to maintain recovery as a way of life.

**When:** Wednesdays, 6.00pm - 9.30pm

## Alumni Workshop Dates for 2013

Alumni Workshops are a great way to continue your self-development in the real world. They are also an opportunity for you to re-connect with SPP's supportive environment and make friends within the alumni community. You will find that each workshop is distinctly different from the last. We encourage your questions and group discussion to ensure that our workshops are a shared learning experience for all.

### **Saturday 2 March**

Relationship Patterns with Adriana Villar

### **Saturday 1 June**

SPP in the Real World with Steve Stokes

### **Saturday 7 September**

Relationship Patterns with Adriana Villar

### **Saturday 2 December**

SPP in the Real World with Steve Stokes

If you would like to register your interest for any of our workshops then please email [registrations@southpacificprivate.com.au](mailto:registrations@southpacificprivate.com.au)

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