

News Release

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The Tyranny of the “Shoulds”

Tampa, Florida (July, 2011). This is the month when we celebrate Independence Day. A date that reminds us of the many sacrifices generations have made for human freedoms. It is a good time to reflect on the concept of freedom. What is it that makes a person free? There are many responses to that question many of which might be defined by the “law of the land” or “political concepts.” But let’s take a bit of a deeper look

This is also summer time. Have you watched any children lately. They can crouch over an ant hill and watch the ants move, work together and build a mound. They are filled with wonder. As so many parents know, when you are speaking with a child the conversation is often filled with “why this” and “why that.” They use their imaginations and energy and often speak in poetry. As in the case of many other cultures, children often don’t have a sense of time or the sense of urgency that we adults have. Why is it that they get excited about a lightning bug or can lay on their backs and spend time looking at stars. Why is it that they rather “take a chance” on life with an emphasis of healthy enjoyment? Where did they learn that...or were they born that way.

Now let’s take a look at ourselves. When did we become so driven that we kept looking at power, prestige, wealth, fame and were filled with worry as a result. When did we stop looking at the beauty of the Great Blue Heron wading in water, of the Spanish Moss hanging from trees. When did we forget to play?

When did we begin to focus on the problems and negatives and worries of life?

An even more important question is whether we desire to continue down the same road or do we desire to get in touch with the things of beauty. So many of us are driven by what Albert Ellis has called “the tyranny of the shoulds.” Ever catch yourself with your “litany of shoulds”: I should lose weight. I should eat healthy foods. I should exercise more. I should do something about my anger issues. I should write a will. I should get an annual physical. And the list goes on. So many of these “shoulds” are actually beneficial. The problem is that we put a lot of them on ourselves with little if any intent of doing anything about them. Then there are the totally unrealistic “shoulds” with which we burden ourselves.

Ever wonder what would happen if we one day went to the beach alone or sat under a tree in the backyard and asked ourselves one simple question: “What changes would bring happiness into my life?” What if we one day looked in the mirror, made eye contact with ourselves, really looked at ourselves and then asked the image we saw to be our best friend. What changes would slowly begin to be made.

Remember the movie, “The Bucket List?” The premise was based on what individuals have put off in their lifetime that would have brought tremendous joy...usually because we are so busy telling ourselves all the things we should, must, and have to do.

What can you do if you if you find yourself on the “treadmill of life” or stuck in the same old spot instead of reaching out and being truly free? Just call your EAP and you will be directed to our experienced team of counselors. It is that simple. We will help you cope, find assistance, and guide you down the path to effectively dealing with whatever might be impacting your life. Help is available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.