

Marriage and Family Corner: More

Mary McKinney | Posted: Monday, November 30, 2015 8:45 am

‘Tis the season of giving and receiving. Or, is it the season of sacrifice and duty? ‘Tis the season of abundance. Or, is it the season of excess or deficiency? ‘Tis the season of cheer. Or, is it the season of distress?

During this holiday season, it is wise to examine how we give and receive. Giving and receiving cheerfully, in the spirit of joy and peace, creates more — either more of what is being given, or of something that will matter even more.



Tis the season

Givers might appear quite friendly, or even festive, even when they are experiencing distress, or are not tending to their own needs in some fundamental way.

These givers are depleted by the way they are giving. A lack of self-care by the giver might turn giving into a burden, because there are not enough emotional, material or other reserves to meet basic needs.

On the contrary, cheerful giving replenishes or uplifts the giver, even when the giver makes a sacrifice.

I recently read a version of this Al-Anon statement: “Learn to give from overflow, rather than from reserves. In this self-care, we learn to let go of burdens we were never meant to carry.”

Giving from overflow doesn’t necessarily mean never giving something that we will notice is gone. But, when we give that which flows over from us, we often share what is best of us.

In the sharing, we increase the flow. This type of giving is wonderful self-care and it refills our reserves. It helps create a steady overflow from which we may continue this joyful cycle.

Ironically, the more we give in this way, the more we have for ourselves — and, the more we have to give.

We carry many burdens because we don’t take care of ourselves. We carry many burdens because we engage with our distress more than we notice and build our abundance.

At times, finding overflow can be a challenge, especially when stress is high. We may need to first replenish, or heal, before overflow returns.

Or, we might also be distracted from seeing overflow because of something we don't have. Focusing on what we don't have to offer might prevent us from seeing what we do have.

For example, a burden might be carried by a giver who wants to give something to a receiver with more material means than the giver.

After all, the receiver may be able to buy a much nicer replacement for anything that might be offered. But, the giver may refocus and give from her abundance.

Thoughtfulness, creativity, humor or understanding might overflow from the giver for a gift that the receiver enjoys — and by which the giver's life is made better, in some way.

As you review your gift list to offer what is meaningful to the recipient, be mindful of what is overflowing for and from you.

If your overflow includes financial means, being generous with it can be very rewarding from you and to the receiver in many ways. But, regardless of your financial means, or lack thereof, be sure to broaden your view to other abundance. To do that requires honesty about your strengths and resources. It won't work if you settle for saying, "I wish I had (fill in the blank), because then I would (fill in the blank)." Instead, ask yourself "What sort of gifts have I most valued receiving" and "What sort of gifts have I most valued giving?"

Last month, I wrote about the importance of knowing you have enough and that you are enough. This month, I want to encourage you to give more.

What delightful creations we are that those ideas are not contradictory. In fact, they are dependent upon one another.

Enjoying what you have and who you are allows you to give freely from what is both your sufficiency and your abundance.

This freedom allows cheer in giving and fills your reserves and increases your overflow.

During this holiday season, I wish you enough. And, I wish you more.

Mary McKinney, MA, LMFT

McKinney & Associates Marriage and Family Therapy, Inc. 828-268-0155

For urgent matters and first-time callers: 828-773-5463

www.mckinneymft.com