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NORTH SHORE GUIDE TO ACTIVE LIVING

Avoiding 'code red' situations

Centre offering tips for families during the holiday season

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WHEN Uncle Bob comes over for the holiday dinner, there's a plan in place: don't say anything to provoke him, steer clear of sensitive subjects and when he asks for his eighth beer, tactfully don't serve him.

Practising a choreographed dance of avoidance is a situation all too familiar to many families over the holiday season. For many, being quiet and sensitive seems like the only way to deal with a family member whose addiction or general overindulgence and bad behaviour makes them an unwelcome holiday visitor.

But according to Cathy Patterson-Sterling, program director for the Sunshine Coast Health Centre, practising such methods of avoidance will not only make the holidays a trying time for the whole family, it can also encourage someone with a substance abuse problem to pursue their dangerous habit.

The centre recently published a guide for families coping with similar annual challenges, *Avoiding Code Red: 5 Ways to Stop Intoxicated Family Members from Ruining the Holidays and Special Events*. The guide is available for free at www.sunshinecoasthealth-centre.ca.

For many families with members who are troubled with drug or alcohol addictions, the holidays become a dreaded time of year, said Patterson-Sterling.

"When we're together as families at the holiday time, what occurs is that there's behaviours that we can't ignore," she said. "When we're living in provinces separately, we can ignore them, and often people with addictions will surround themselves with fellow alcoholics and addicts, so their behaviour seems really normal."

Sometimes the holiday situation becomes so fearsome, she said, that a family member is uninvited to the holiday celebrations — a situation that can cause a rift within the family between sympathetic and non-sympathetic sides.

"People with addictions are often masters at dividing and conquering families," said Patter-



NEWS photo Terry Peters

FOR many families with members who are troubled with drug or alcohol addictions, the holidays become a dreaded time of year. The Sunshine Coast Health Centre recently published a guide for families to help them cope.

son-Sterling. "Families will often divide into two camps, where one side of the family feels sorry for the person and says, 'Oh, you know, they're going through a rough time' and the other half says, 'No, call the behaviour for what it is, and let's deal with this.'"

If their concerns aren't aired, she said, when family members do get together, "it becomes like an elephant in the room," with everyone walking on eggshells in an effort to avoid an outburst from a chaos-causing individual or talking about them behind their back.

Patterson-Sterling advises a direct approach to avoiding the

annual family meltdown. First, family members should consider the level of concern required for the family member in question, a process that Patterson-Sterling navigates with a three-C formula:

- **Control** — can they set limits for themselves?
- **Compulsion** — are they compelled to use their drug of choice?
- **Consequences** — are bad things happening to them and they're continuing anyway?

Then, family members should get together, as early as possible before the holidays begin, and bring their concerns to the family member in question with love and

concern.

"The best gift that we can give them is to hold up a mirror and say, look, you're self-destructing and you need help. And this is what help looks like, here's the number for a counsellor or a treatment centre," she said. The family could also employ the services of a drug or alcohol interventionist.

During the holiday meal, however, isn't the best time to bring up family grievances, said Patterson-Sterling. Especially for people who will be hosts of holiday events, it's important to set

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... recover the moisture from underneath
that's truly more than just skin deep.

People, who are seeking an alternative to surgery to remove facial wrinkles, are turning to an ancient Chinese treatment, "Acupuncture Face Lift", which was very popular among the wealthy in China.

North Vancouver's Dr. Tahmineh Nikookar, who has operated a clinic on the North Shore for more than 10 years, was one of the first practitioners of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) to revive the procedure and re-introduce it to clients in British Columbia. Acupuncture facelift tightens tones and encourages firming of the skin by stimulating **natural production of collagen**; it also increases circulation which improves facial color as well.

But the benefits aren't limited to the facial area. Acupuncture face lift is a practice that promotes the overall health and well-being of the entire body. It helps with sinus congestion, symptoms of toothache, Bell's palsy, insomnia, dizziness, stress, depression, and aids ones self-

But the benefits aren't limited to the facial area.

esteem, among other conditions.

Cosmetically, it can help to eliminate fine lines on the face and has a diminishing effect on larger wrinkles. It targets the double chins, lifts drooping eyelids and reduces jowls, tightens facial muscles and pores, improves metabolism, slows down the aging process, and helps to release harmful toxins.

Manual lymph drainage is done to rid the body of harmful toxins which affects the face and upper body.

In the treatment sessions Dr. Nikookar uses "Floramin" anti-wrinkle herbal creams and toners, which are purely natural.

Clients often notice a difference in their appearance after their very first treatment, Dr. Nikookar also regularly sees younger patients in their 20's as preventative medicine and to stall the aging process.

Acupuncture facelift is not limited to women. Dr. Nikookar has a number of male patients who see the benefits of the treatment.

One of her clients who extols the virtues of the procedure is model and author Bet Gibson, who is now a firm believer in the merits of acupuncture facelift.

"I highly recommend acupuncture facial rejuvenation as an alternative to plastic surgery," she says. "The results are amazing even after the first session. Your skin looks firmer and brighter, years younger. The sessions are painless, relaxing and there is no downtime. Acupuncture rejuvenation is more than skin deep. It is as good for the soul as it is for the skin."

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Deadline extended

Youth invited to submit YouTube videos

REPRESENTATIVES of Jessie's Hope Society have extended the deadline for their What Makes You Strong? YouTube video submission contest.

B.C. youth between the ages of 12 and 22 now have until Jan.

25, 2008 to make their submission. Three winning video finalists will receive their awards during Eating Disorder Awareness Week, Feb. 3-9, 2008. Additionally, the videos will be used in a public awareness campaign.

Jessie's Hope Society honours the life of West Vancouver's Jessie Alexander. Alexander struggled with an eating disorder for six years and, in 2002, at the age of 20, took her own life due to complications resulting from her eating disorder and depression. Her hope was to prevent youth and children

from experiencing the horror of an eating disorder.

MuchMusic host and segment producer of Going Coastal Lauren Toyota has offered her support to the short video competition. She's serving as a contest judge and will help decide who will be awarded \$1,750 worth of scholarship money

For more information on the contest, visit www.youtube.com/group/jessieshope or www.jessieshope.org, or, e-mail youtube@jessieshope.org.

—Erin McPhee

Giving a chance at hope

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out ground rules early.

"We don't want to wait until actual Christmas day or something, while the person's drinking, and then say, 'By the way, I think you have a drinking problem.' It's kind of like pouring gasoline on a fire and watching the explosion," she said.

Families shouldn't feel guilty for bringing up the problems that are making their holidays intolerable, said Patterson-Sterling. Doing so, in fact, is the best gift to give a family member who is wrestling with a substance abuse problem. "If we just kind of feel sorry for them then we're never really giving them a chance at life and a chance at hope and a chance at a better way," she said.

Families often enforce an unofficial hands-

off rule that the person with the drug or alcohol problem shouldn't be harassed, or that other family members shouldn't comment on their behaviour.

"We're supposed to protect them with our silence and we're actually killing them with our silence, because in many cases they're not even aware of what they're doing," said Patterson-Sterling.

Patience, too, is important, she said, as even with forthright confrontation, counselling and the like, dealing with an addiction is a process. Jumping to quick fixes — like New Year's resolutions to not drink — will often result in relapses down the road. Yet it's a message of hope that she hopes to pass on to family members: "they do have options, and they're not powerless," she said.

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