

Tender Hearts Child Therapy Center



Monthly Newsletter



Specializing in Child, Adolescent & Family Counseling

Seasons Greetings!

It's hard to believe that it's December already! This time of year is one in which we often reflect on the events of the year, the happy, the sad, the stressful. . . At Tender Hearts, we encourage you to use this as an opportunity to develop healthy lines of communication with your children. Take a moment to reflect on the successes of this past year and celebrate them with your children.

This issue is packed with great "end of the year" information. If your child is worried about end of the semester finals, check out Melissa's article on page 5 about Anxiety in Children and Adolescents.

Want more family connectedness this holiday season? Check out Paula's article with tips on creating family traditions. Paula gives great suggestions for family traditions as well as strategies to make your traditions more successful for years to come.

In this issue, you will also find our next Stronger Families Campaign Contest and local Family Friendly Events.

If you haven't already signed up for our Newsletter, just click [Tender Hearts Monthly Newsletter](#) to sign up!

December

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Location

2909 Independence Street
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Stronger Families Campaign

Christmas Light Scavenger Hunt Contest

Who doesn't like going for a family drive and looking at Christmas lights? Create lasting memories with your children by doing a Christmas Light Scavenger Hunt! Put on some Christmas music, bundle up in blankets, and take a family drive to enjoy those twinkling lights. Send us your answers to the Scavenger Hunt and be entered to win a **Gift Card** to a **Local Business**.

1. How many candy canes did you see on your drive?
2. Which street had the most houses decorated in Christmas Lights?
3. Which street had the prettiest lights?
4. Which famous Christmas character is featured in the Tender Hearts display at Cape County Park?
5. How many Santas appear in the Cape County Park parade of lights?
6. What is the theme of this year's Hutson's Furniture window display?

(Send answers to TenderHearts@TenderHeartsChildTherapyCenter.com. Contest ends December 31, 2013. The winner will be announced in our January Newsletter so be sure to sign up to see if your entry is the big winner.)

Please forward the contest to friends and family as you wish—we want to encourage as many parents as possible to spend quality one-on-one time with their kids this fall!

How does the Stronger Families Campaign Monthly Contest Work?

As you know, we are 100% committed to helping Families in our area build **Stronger Relationships**. Each month, we will introduce a new, Family Friendly Contest to promote and encourage family involvement and family connectedness. And, even better, the **Monthly Contest Winner** will receive a Gift Certificate to a local business that offers fun, family friendly activities or products. Our Counselors will all vote each month for the winner. What a combination! **Supporting Stronger Families and Local Community Businesses at the same time!**



Tender Hearts Happenings

Find the Alligator

Tender Hearts Child Therapy Center has its own variation of the Christmas tradition of “Finding the Pickle Ornament” on the Christmas tree. Our pickle ornament is actually an alligator ornament. Next time you’re in our office, check out our Christmas tree in the waiting room, and see if you can find the alligator.



Tender Hearts

Check out Tender Hearts' Display at the Cape County Parade of Lights!



Family Friendly Events



1. Downtown Christmas Open House. Friday December 6th from 5:00pm-9:00pm. Historic Downtown Cape Girardeau boasts great holiday shopping, special in store events, free carriage rides, free pictures with Santa, children's activities in Santa's workshop, caroling and chances to win a downtown shopping spree package!
2. Flashlight Candy Cane Hunt. Friday December 13th from 6:30pm-7:30pm. Osage Centre. A particular someone has left candy canes all over certain areas of the Osage Centre! Bring your flashlights and help us find them! Upon arrival you'll get to decorate a bag for collecting candy canes. After collecting the candy canes, we will enjoy cookies and hot chocolate. You'll even get to make a Christmas list for Santa telling him everything you would like for Christmas! Parents must accompany children and please dress according to the weather. Ages for the event are 2 and up and the registration deadline is December 12th. \$3 pre-registered (adults and children) and \$5 day of the event (adults and children). Call 339-6342 for more information.
3. Breakfast with Santa. Saturday, December 14th from 9:00am-11:00am. Cape Girardeau Osage Centre. Preregistration cost \$5 per person (child or adult) with a \$3 charge for each additional child. The cost on the day of the event is \$8 per person. Enjoy breakfast and visit with Santa as he makes a special stop in Cape Girardeau to listen to the holiday wishes of every boy and girl. Parents are invited to bring their camera to capture this special moment. Call 339-6340 to register by December 6th and for more information.

~Valerie Bollinger

Child Attacked by the Worry Monster?

Anxiety is the number one mental health problem that children and adolescents face today, and it is also the most treatable. Children and adolescents with anxiety disorders compromise a significant portion of patients treated at mental health centers. Research indicates that up to 10 percent of kindergarten-aged children suffer from an anxiety disorder; a rate that jumps to 15 percent of high-school students. Without intervention, children and adolescents can grow into their fears, rather than grow out of them. Untreated anxiety disorders in children and adolescents can lead to educational problems, depression, an increased risk of substance abuse, and other mental health problems.



Although transient fears and anxieties are considered part of normal development, an anxiety disorder is diagnosed if the anxiety becomes a persistent negative force in the child's life or causes significant impairment with school, peer involvement, or family functioning. Anxiety can be described as excessive fear about real *or imagined* circumstances. The central characteristic of anxiety is worry, which is excessive concern about situations with uncertain outcomes. There are many types of anxiety disorders, but the most common in children and adolescents are: Separation Anxiety Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Social Phobia Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Symptoms of an anxiety disorder can build gradually or come out of nowhere. Children and adolescents with anxiety may not know what is causing the emotions, worries, or sensations they have. It is important to note that anxiety disorders in children and adolescents often take different forms than in adults. Red flags may include:

- Persistent stomach aches
- Reluctance to go to sleep or problems sleeping through the night
- Refusal to attend school
- Trouble concentrating
- Restlessness or fatigue during waking hours
- Resistance to separation from caretakers
- Frequent tantrums and defiance

Problems with anxiety can be treated effectively by a mental health professional, especially if detected early. A therapist can look at the symptoms, diagnose the specific anxiety disorder, and create an effective plan to help the child or adolescent manage and overcome anxiety. As early as kindergarten, children can learn skills to successfully cope with anxiety symptoms. A main goal for treating anxiety in children and adolescents is *not* to undermine the child's fears, but to teach them that their fears are unwarranted and that they can overcome them. Although no one treatment approach works best for every child or adolescent, a therapist can teach essential coping strategies and concrete problem-solving skills to reduce overall anxiety symptoms. Additionally, a therapist can help the child or adolescent replace negative thinking patterns with positive ones. These are techniques that a child or adolescent can use immediately and for years to come.

Creating Lasting Holiday Traditions

The holidays can be a wonderful time of the year to share with those we love. These few weeks out of the year can give us some of the best memories we have of childhood. Whether it be spending time baking or cooking in the kitchen together or decorating your home together, each family can create their own holiday traditions to cherish through the years. Spending quality time together as a family promotes a greater sense of family connectedness and communication. It also allows children to feel more attached and secure in the family unit, which can increase positive interactions for the entire family.

There are a few things to keep in mind when creating holiday traditions with your family. Hopefully this new tradition will be one that will be repeated for years to come. A few ideas could be baking or cooking a favorite food together, going to look at a holiday light display, or even a family movie night at home. Involve the entire family in the decision making process. Ask your children what they would enjoy doing together. Allowing children to have input on the activity will lead to them being more invested in the tradition.

Start simple with an activity that can easily be repeated each year. As the years go by, these traditions can be re-assessed and modified as needed. As children get older there may be new or different traditions that better fit your family. Continue to make the decision making process a family affair so that each member feels involved in the tradition. Find what fits for you family – the goal is to spend time together and feel connected as a unit.



~ Paula Johnston MA, LPC