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Family Paths Along The Way eNewsletter

Family Paths promotes the development of nurturing, responsible and resilient families within our diverse communities by providing comprehensive services that foster positive change, empowering parents and children.

Greetings From Our Executive Director

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During this holiday season, more than ever, our thoughts turn to those who have made our programs possible. We are grateful for the many kind donors and volunteers who have supported us over the years.



Your gifts help to provide support services to children and families throughout Alameda County. No matter how small or large the gift, we put it to good and effective use in providing vital services and resources. Family Paths has a long standing commitment to maximizing the dollars we receive in order to better serve the community. This means your donation is spent where it is most needed.

Hotline Volunteer Training



Our next Volunteer Training begins in January. If you are interested in volunteering on our hotline, please visit our website for more information.

This year, when so many are facing difficulties, we appreciate your donation more than ever. Your gift will make a difference in the lives of our many families. Annual gifts allow us to continue providing:

- 24 Hour Support to parents in need. We are here, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide counseling and community referrals to parents and caregivers in need. Whether it's a mom who has had a stressful day and isn't able to cope, a grandparent caring for an energetic teenager, or a father bewildered by his out-of-control toddler, Family Paths is here.
- Support for foster parents and kinship caregivers. We recognize the amount of dedication they show in creating homes for children with nowhere else to go. It's often a difficult process and our services help these newly formed families come together to create a strong and cohesive bond.

- Parent Education classes that promote positive parenting techniques to help ensure that every child is well nurtured, emotionally healthy, and capable of reaching their own full potential.
- Counseling services for children who have been victimized by sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, including those who have witnessed family and community violence.
- Mental health consultation at Oakland Preschool and Head Start programs.
- In-Home Child-Parent Counseling which supports the social and emotional development of children from birth to five years of age, while strengthening relationships between parent and child.

On behalf of our Board, staff, and many volunteers I would like to thank you for your continued support of our programs and wish you a happy and healthy new year. From our Family to Yours, thank you once again.

Together we can build stronger families.

Marcella Reeves

Finding Peace Within Support Group

"Since re-living trauma often occurs in the form of physical sensations which in turn precipitate intense trauma related emotions of terror and helplessness, learning how to manage and uncouple physical sensations from trauma-based emotions has emerged as one of the essential aspects of the effective treatment of PTSD"

Bessel van der Kolk, MD



Over the past ten years, Amy Attiyeh, MFT and Phyllis Lorenz, MFT have worked extensively with survivors of many kinds of trauma. In the course of their work, they have realized that many of the traditional therapeutic interventions were ineffective in helping clients to function optimally in their lives.

When one has had life experiences in which they felt their life was in danger, they do not automatically "get over it" once the danger has passed. Our nervous system works to protect us by alerting us to potential threats. Trauma affects the non-verbal parts of the brain and body, allowing seemingly innocuous stimuli to trigger a variety of emotional and sensory responses. Many trauma survivors have overreactive nervous systems which often cause them to react to benign stimuli as if they were experiencing a real threat.

Amy and Phyllis have developed a support group to help women cope with life more effectively, and be able to manage their emotional and sensory responses when triggered. "***Finding Peace Within***" is a group whose goal is to help women who have had traumatic experiences be able to live

a life beyond whatever their individual histories have created for them. This group seeks to help women live in the present, not reliving the past or fearing the future. They help group members learn to separate and identify the different parts of their experience. They also teach members to expand their fields of awareness so that their life is not "all about the trauma" allowing them to open up to more positive aspects of life, finding balance. Our hope and goal is that as women develop and master these skills, they will be empowered to create new experiences rather than being a victim of their past.

Tips For Surviving The Winter Holidays

Whether you celebrate Hannukah, Kwanzaa, Solstice, Yule or Matariki, the winter holidays can bring tension as well as joy. Kids on vacation, tough economic times, the pressure to create the "perfect holiday," and simply wanting the best for your family can add to the



stress. We've put together some helpful ways of dealing with these challenges that can help you have a more relaxed, fun, and maybe even a more meaningful holiday season. The quickest and easiest way to cut down on your stress this season is to simplify your holiday plans.

- **Time With Friends and Family** Do you visit your friends and family one at a time over the holidays? If you have a large number of friends you want to see over the holidays, a group lunch is one way to get together without a lot of traveling. Meeting at a restaurant also cuts down on the amount of cooking you need to do at home. Even if not everyone in the group knows each other it can be a fun way for them to connect with new people.
- **Holiday Meals** Is there anything you can make ahead and freeze? Could you ask friends and family members to bring a dish to share? If you always host a big crowd, can someone else do it this year? All of these ideas will allow your family's chef more time outside the kitchen on the day of your celebration.
- **Gift Giving and Shopping** Is there any shopping you can do online? If you have a big family, a gift exchange is a great way to streamline your shopping. Instead of buying gifts forever individual member of your family, everyone pulls the name of one other family member for gift giving. If you're stumped a gift card makes a great gift for a teenager.
- **Kids and Winter Break** Keep a consistent bedtime. Getting enough rest and having consistency can reduce meltdowns.
- Arrange play dates with other families so you get a little alone time during the hectic season.

- Talk to kids about the meaning of the holiday your family celebrates. Focusing on the message of celebration can bring the family closer together.
- If your family has recently gone through a major transition, such as a divorce, discuss with your children what would make the holiday special for them. Is there a tradition they want to continue? Is there a new tradition you can create together? What will make them feel safe, secure, and loved?

Holidays can be an emotionally challenging time for people. Whether it's because the holiday pressures of work and family, feelings of isolation or loneliness, economic worries, or any other stressor, the holidays can magnify difficulties people are already having. Make sure to ask for help when you need it from friends, family, clergy, your physician, and Family Paths. Our Support and Resource Line is here for you 24 hours a day/7 days a week.

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