

Press Release

Look Out for Those Grieving this Christmas

Monday, 10th December 2012: Look out for those grieving this Christmas is the message from the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP). Many people suffer in silence over the festive period as they deal with the loss a loved one during the year and it is important to notice if someone close to you is suffering. A research report commissioned by the IACP shows that one in eight Irish people keep their personal problems and difficulties to themselves.

“Christmas is difficult for many as they feel lonely after losing a loved one during the year. People shouldn’t suffer in silence this Christmas. Talk to a friend, family member or your GP. An accredited counsellor can provide coping mechanisms to get through the festive period. You should look out for those who may be feeling lonely this Christmas,” said Shane Kelly, Professional Services Manager of the IACP.

Christmas is seen as a family time, a time of reunions and there is an expectation that people will be cheerful. Christmas traditions involve visiting and giving and receiving presents but for someone who has suffering a loss or is still grieving, their loss is emphasised.

“In more recent years the Christmas season begins as soon as Halloween is over and this can make it more difficult for someone who is feeling down. People can be out of their usual routine during the holiday period. Alcohol consumption tends to be higher during Christmas and it does not help the person in grief in the long term, as it is a depressant. Memories of past Christmases can bring great sadness, especially if the loss was unexpected,” said Geraldine Gilroy, Regional Chairperson of the North West Committee of the IACP.

There are tell-tale signs that someone is suffering at Christmas, including people avoiding parties and a change in eating habits. You can help family members who are exhibiting these signs by encouraging them to talk and helping them to plan Christmas.

“Tell-tale signs include an outgoing person turning down invitations and avoiding company or if someone is displaying mood swings. Watch out for changes in eating or sleeping habits. A person who is struggling can let personal appearance go. Our body language can tell a lot about our mood; the tone of voice, eye-contact. You can help by asking the person how they are. Encourage them to talk and listen to them. If they don't feel comfortable talking to you suggest they talk to someone else - a friend, their doctor or a counsellor. Don't be afraid to name the person who is no longer with them. Ask them what they think might help or invite them to plan ahead to get through the holiday,” said Geraldine Gilroy.

Tips for those grieving over Christmas

- Take time to plan for the holiday, do something very different;
- Surround yourself with whatever brings you comfort and a sense of wellbeing e.g. listening to music;
- Watch comedies on TV;
- Exercise, wrap up and brave the elements, fresh air is healthy and invigorating;
- Avoid alcohol ;
- Talk to someone about how you are feeling.

Some key findings from the report include:

- One in four (25%) Irish people have attended counselling or psychotherapy;
- 7 out of 10 (70%) people said they would discuss problems with a friend or family member.

- Almost one in four Irish people (23%) would be embarrassed if people knew they were attending a counsellor or psychotherapist.

The full report about Irish people and their attitudes to counselling and psychotherapy can be found on the IACP website, www.iacp.ie.

ENDS

About IACP:

Established in 1981, the IACP identifies, develops and maintains professional standards of excellence in counselling and psychotherapy through education, training and accreditation. In promoting best practice and the professional development of its members, IACP holds at its core the protection of the public. Representing both the interests of clients and practitioners (over 3,500 nationwide), IACP provides a telephone referral helpline, an information service; and an online counsellor / psychotherapist / supervisor directory. IACP is a registered Charity (CHY 6615).

More information is available from the IACP's website www.iacp.ie.

References:

The IACP research survey was carried out by Behaviour and Attitudes Marketing Research Ltd.