



THE INSTITUTE FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES OF NORTH TEXAS

"helping achieve small miracles!"

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Surviving in an Economic Recession

By Sandra W. Froese, Ed.D, LPC-S, © 2010

As we approach this holiday season, it should be a time of joy and happiness as we reconnect with loved ones around a bountiful table of food and the tradition of exchanging gifts. For those families who are without jobs and their savings depleted, this season may be very difficult to handle. For those who are just "hanging on" we must not allow fear to keep us from enjoying each other during this wonderful season of hope.

Don't be tempted to borrow money for the holidays if you have no idea how you will repay a loan. Children are remarkably resilient if you tell them that the family will need to do some belt-tightening this year. If you are short on cash, discover all the things you can do as a family this holiday season that doesn't cost money. Drag out the interactive games such as cards, checkers or Scrabble. (Yes, I know it doesn't sound as exciting as a video game for the middle school set, but do it anyway!) String popcorn and cranberries for the tree and after Christmas take it outside and watch the birds and wildlife feast on it. If someone in your family plays an instrument such as piano or guitar, have a family karaoke contest some evening. Make gifts for each other to exchange instead of spending money you don't have.

As a small child I discovered a beautiful doll bed under the Christmas tree made by my father and doll clothes made by my mother! At the time, I did not know that my parents didn't have money that year to buy Christmas gifts. My brother received a wooden truck complete with sideboards carved by my father and my sister received a doll buggy made by my father and doll clothes made by my mother. We didn't receive any store-bought toys for Christmas that year, but we received something of far more value—the love and creativity of my parents to provide unique gifts for their children in spite of the lack of money.

Tough times are temporary! If you are without a job, then consider volunteering for a worthy cause or non-profit organization. If you have some manual skills, help build a house for Habitat for Humanity. If you are a good caregiver, volunteer at the local hospital or hospice. If you are a spiritual person, volunteer at a church. If you like kids, volunteer at a school or teach Sunday School. If you like books, volunteer at the public library. If you like to entertain elderly people, volunteer at the nursing home. Spending a few hours a week as a volunteer will place you with some good people who might know of a job opening. You will enjoy the companionship and the opportunity to do something for others.

Use this opportunity this winter to take a college course or two at your local community college. The tuition is nominal and a scholarship might be available to waive the cost of tuition and books, especially if you are a single mother. If it is not possible to take a college course, then visit the local public library and read up on topics of interest. If you have enough money for gasoline, take a road trip and get a winter perspective on our national parks, great cities, the mountains or beaches. If you have a camera, brush up on your photography skills and look for interesting photo shoots. If you like to cook, this is the time to try out new recipes. If you like to write, keep a journal of your experiences and write short stories.

And, last but not least, take care of yourself. Exercise every day and eat the right foods. This is not the time of your life to sit around eating a box of chocolates, watching TV endlessly and feeling sorry yourself!

For an appointment with Dr. Sandra W. Froese, LPC-S, Institute for Healthy Family of North Texas LLC, call our office at 972-569-8843 and leave a message with your name and phone number. Or, e-mail swfroese@sbcglobal.net with information about your problems and she will reply within 24 hours. For more information about our counseling services and fees, go to our website at www.texasicounselors.com. A 30-minute consultation is offered at no charge so that you can determine if Dr. Froese is the right counselor for your needs and so she can determine if she can be of assistance. Our rates are affordable.