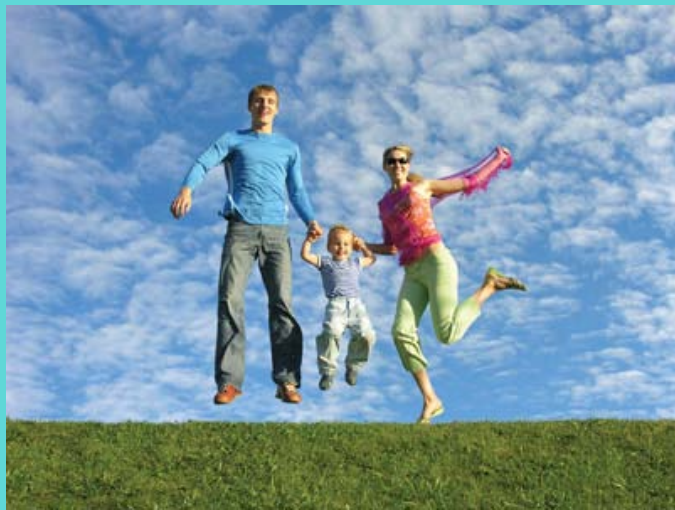


# Art Psychotherapy Counselling Services™



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## The Effective Tip Corner

### *Twelve Thoughts For The Holiday Season*

**1. EXPECTATIONS** - keep them realistic so that you can enjoy celebrating Christmas and just be yourself. Some people try to keep up an act of pretense around relatives or friends, but it is more important to be YOU than someone else's idea of who you are.

**2. GRATITUDE** - being grateful for what you have as a family is important. Make sure your children feel gratitude as well. Before opening presents this holiday season, come together as a family, donate toys to Toys For Tots, volunteer serving a holiday meal at a local shelter, or donate your gently used clothes to a local family charity. Christmas may be a season of getting, but it's also a season of giving.

**3. TOGETHERNESS** - is to feel whole as a family creating rituals and memories that last a lifetime. This season of extended family time can bring about meltdowns in children (and adults!), so be sure that between all the visiting, guests and more formal occasions, you remember to have spend some time with your immediate family. Take it slowly one morning, stay in pajamas extra long. Cuddle up on the couch and read a story Christmas Eve morning or during one of the post-Christmas mornings. Be intuitive to your feelings as well as those of your partner and children.

**4. MEET & GREET** - treat this Christmas like it is your first. Or, better yet, think about it through the eyes of your child. The excitement, anticipation (and maybe even a little bit of the fear of Santa). Greet Christmas morning with enthusiasm. It's a little different than your routine day, so maybe the rules don't have to be as strict this morning, or maybe instead of eating breakfast first, you all open presents first -- and don't worry as much if a candy cane gets eaten before noon.

**5. FEEL** - the spirit of Christmas, the love between you all, the being and accepting of one another. Tell each other how you feel. Whilst sitting at the breakfast table, go around and have everyone say what they love about the person sitting next to them, across the table, etc. and have them name something nice that person has done for them this year.

*"It has helped me to speak my mind & even be open with others about what I think & how I feel."*

*- unknown client*



*"Art therapy has helped me to see & deal with issues in a more conscious way."*  
*- unknown client*



### Groups Available

Children New into Foster Care

Empowering Teens

Child Victims of Sexual Abuse

Children of Addicted Parents

**6. REST & RELAX** - with the stress and anticipation of everything leading up to the season, it is important that you all have some down time. Spend a day hanging out as a family, watching TV, reading books, and playing in the snow. Keep it calm and keep it mellow. Your body and mind will thank you for it?

**7. RESPECT** - if you, your partner or your children have made decisions as to how they will spend their holiday time off (not doing chores/repairs around the house, at a friend's two days in a row, at the mall ...) respect their choices up to a point. You may not agree with them, but remember, it's their vacation time as well and everyone deserves a little bit of a break from their daily routine.

**8. LISTEN** - when someone is talking to you or conveying how they feel. Really take the time to listen and understand their situation. People use the holiday season to reach out when they need support or understanding. Be sure to listen to what friends and family are telling you (everything from little family updates to personal confidences) and let them know you are always there for them.

**9. ROUTINE** - yes, the holidays and vacation time offer a bit of a reprieve from routines, but remember it doesn't mean you should throw them out the window completely - especially the children's routine. Children crave the structure, and, though they like to hear when rules are bent, going days without a bedtime or endless amounts of candy, or hours in front of the TV will not do them any good. Let them know when you are giving them a break from a little bit of the daily routine (a later bedtime, for instance) but make sure to keep it as consistent as possible. That way, it will be much easier to plow back into it full-force in the New Year.

**10. REMEMBER** - everyone has lost a loved one or has someone in their extended family/friends who isn't well. Be sure to honor those people during this time of year. Tell your children stories about their grandmother at Christmas time (perhaps even make a special dinner she used to make). Send holiday get-well cards to an ailing family member. Be sure to keep those you've lost in your family's heart and honor their spirit during the holidays.

**11. RESOLVE** - any old or pending conflicts should be resolved before the New Year. Start 2010 off with a fresh slate. Forgive and forget and move on. Talk it out, be accepting. Ring in the New Year with as little baggage as possible.

**12. YOURSELF** - don't forget about you. Take the time out for a date night with your partner or a few hours of time for yourself. Go to a movie, get a manicure, spend an hour at the bookstore, meet up with an old friend for coffee, take a long bath. Remember who you are.



### Treatment Offered

Individual Art Psychotherapy  
 Couples Art Psychotherapy  
 Family Art Psychotherapy  
 Group Art Psychotherapy  
 Trauma Assessments  
 Structured Sibling Visitation Sessions  
 Parent Therapeutic Access Sessions  
 School Support Services  
 Psycho-educational Sessions  
 Victim Services of York Region

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*"Sessions have helped  
me express things  
inside me which would  
otherwise have been  
suppressed."  
- unknown client*



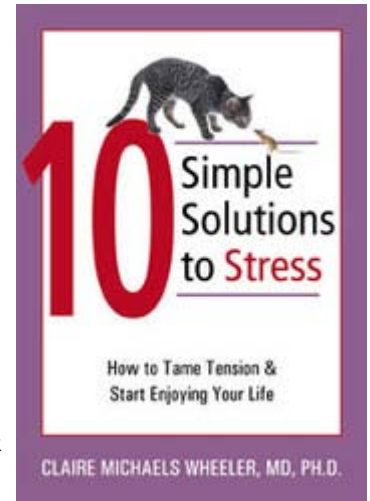
## Recommended Therapeutic Resource

### "10 Simple Solutions to Stress – How to Tame Tension and Start Enjoying Your Life"

Author – Claire Michaels Wheeler

Stress. We all struggle with it. We know it can shorten our lives, age us prematurely, make us fat-yet we can't seem to escape it. One more thing we know is that, ultimately, we're the only ones who can stop stress from taking over our lives. So what are you waiting for? This little book offers ten simple solutions you can put into practice right now to reduce stress.

Based on positive psychology, mind-body medicine, and cognitive behavioral therapy, the ten simple solutions in this book offer powerful antidotes to stress. These practices and stress-rescue techniques will help you to cope effectively with stressful moments throughout your day. Try them and, in no time at all, you'll start enjoy better health and balanced more fulfilling life.



## Interesting Monthly Feature

Whether it's *A Christmas Carol*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles*, *Home Alone*, *Miracle on 34th Street*, or the more contemporary *Elf*, chances are you have a traditional film you always watch around this time of year. It's probably no surprise that in addition to their entertainment value, these films embody universal messages that have the power to help you sort out your psyche and take stock of your life.

Cinematherapy is a tongue-in-cheek term used to describe the use of cinema (movies) to help people explore personal concerns and gain insights about themselves. In fact, it is a method used by many therapists, particularly those who work with marital and family issues. According to [Cinematherapy.com](http://Cinematherapy.com), watching movies actually engages several forms of information processing: the logical (plot), the linguistic (dialogs), the visual-spatial (pictures, colors, symbols), the musical (sounds and music), the interpersonal (storytelling), the kinesthetic (moving), and the intra-psychic (inner guidance). Movies, like art, suggest mythic themes and fables, similar to the symbolic content of dreams—in other words, they mirror our lives, personal and universal struggles, and relationships.

Holiday films are particularly evocative, not only because of their content, but also because they air at a time of year when we are taking stock of our lives and relationships, reflecting on endings, and imagining new beginnings. But their messages reach beyond the season to more common themes. During the week following the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, I worked at residential treatment facility with group of children who, like most people, were struggling with the television images of collapsing buildings, chaos, and tragedy. At a loss to explain the events the children had witnessed on TV, I asked the group if they could recall a story or movie that reminded them of what had happened. Almost immediately, one of the children said, "the Grinch!" The group members all agreed; from a child's perspective, it felt like someone came and stole all the presents, leaving everyone wondering why something so horrible could happen without warning. The Grinch is not just a Christmas character, but also a universally recognized killjoy of epic proportions.

So have another look at that film that resonates with you for whatever reason and think about your life over the past year. Maybe it feels like the Grinch came by and took all your presents [house, retirement fund, or job] or there's no plane, train, or automobile to get where you want to be, metaphorically or otherwise. Or you may recall those friends who made the road you traveled in 2009 just a little easier to navigate and helped you understand that you are wiser and braver than you ever believed. And you may realize, despite endless frustrations or delayed gratifications, it really is a wonderful life because your worth is measured not by your bankroll, Blackberry, or flat screen, but by your friends and family. Maybe it's just a movie, but it's also that once-a-year chance to "gain your wings" (ala Clarence in *It's a Wonderful Life*) and enjoy a flight of imagination **that inevitably leads us back home.**

Reference from [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com) - Written by Cathy Malchiodi