



Remembering Christmas

a newsletter for people who care about self-esteem

Volume 12, Number 5 - Issue 71 - September-October, 1992

Dear Reader:

Around the world it is common for groups of people to celebrate the solstice - that special, energizing time when the shortest or longest day of the year signals the turning of the seasons. In the northern hemisphere December 21 means spring is coming. In the southern hemisphere it means you can look forward to autumn.

In America, as well as signaling a new year, this powerful change time coincides with the Christian celebration of Christmas. Because Christmas has become such a big commercial event, Christians and non Christians alike are surrounded by the symbols of Christmas.

To help individuals and families celebrate or understand this holiday in meaningful ways, Carole Gesme has invented a Christmas Puzzle Game. This issue of **WE** introduces that game and includes sheets of Memory Joggers or Celebration cards that are part of the Christmas Game package. Several ways to use the cards are suggested.

If you are Christian, you can use the cards, or the game, to teach your children which parts of the celebration are specifically related to the birth of Jesus. Through the years, many customs have been borrowed or adapted from other religions or solstice celebrations and added to the Christmas celebration package to make it more diverse or colorful. Perhaps people who do not celebrate Christmas can use these cards to explain to their children some of the meanings behind the many symbols they see. You can look in your library for **Holly, Reindeer, and Colored Lights - the Story of Christmas Symbols**, Edna Barth, Clarion Books, New York, 1971 or other books about Christmas symbols.

At this time of year, Jews have their own celebration of light at Chanukah. I regret that Carole's Chanukah game is not yet ready. I hope that the Chanukah game and the Christmas game can be used to teach children of both faiths respect for these two very important and very different celebrations.

Those of you who are planning to lead workshops on the meaning of Christmas, how to help families celebrate Christmas, or how to reduce holiday stress, will find ideas in the suggested activities. You can invent many more of your own.

Happy Holidays,

Jean Alsbey Clarke

Dear Reader:

Many years ago I was born on Christmas Day. A baby born on Christmas Day was special and my parents decided to call me Carole. As I was growing up my mother often read to me her favorite book called The Bird's Christmas Carol. It is a story of a girl who is born on Christmas Day and dies on Christmas Day.

Each Christmas I had a great fear that I could never understand. It was a fear that someone would get sick and die. It wasn't until I began to study Transactional Analysis and scripts that I was able to find the origins of my fear - The Bird's Christmas Carol.

We are all full of Christmas expectations. Most of these expectations are related to our childhood experiences, traditions and rituals. The season can be exciting or difficult. For some of us Christmas brings joy, for others it brings stress, loneliness and disappointment.

What do you think and feel when you hear the word Christmas? I thought it should be the time for happiness, the season to be jolly, happy feelings everywhere, time when we all enjoy being together. This was not the case for me. I was afraid every Christmas. Many people are anxious and depressed this time of year.

It has taken me two years, and a lot of testing and changing to create the game Remembering Christmas. You can use the many activities in the game to help you celebrate past and present Christmas pleasures. You can also use it to help you talk about sad memories which will let you begin to heal them. It will allow you to start changing the attitudes and behavior that are not working for you.

Give yourself permission to enjoy this Christmas season. Try new things, develop your own traditions and rituals, use the game to remember that you have choices when it comes to remembering Christmas. Use the parent part of your personality to guide yourself gently as you prepare for the season, use your adult to solve problems and make appropriate changes, use your child part to have fun and find the excitement of the holidays. The responsibility is yours. This can be a time of joy, love, peace and happiness.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas,

Carole Gesme

Memory Joggers and Celebration Cards

Suggested Activities - by Carole Gesme

There are many ways to use these cards. The following are only a few possibilities. These unique cards can be used in endless ways, so feel free to be CREATIVE with them!

Enclosure Cards

For Individuals

- Use the **Memory Jogger/Celebration** cards as personal enclosure cards for your Christmas gifts. *Remembering Christmas* can still be played without them.

Stress Relievers

For Individuals, Family or Group Activity

Along with the Christmas season comes a certain amount of stress. Use these cards as stress relievers.

- Go through each of the **Memory Jogger Cards** and read aloud the ones that you feel stressed about. Set these cards aside.
- One at a time, talk about them and what about that topic causes you stress.
- Make a list of things you can do to help you become unstressed.
- Use the **Celebration Cards** to help you do this.

Christmas is for celebrating

For Families or Groups

- Each person finds the **Celebration Affirmation** that he needs to support the belief that "Christmas is for celebrating."
- People take turns sharing one way in which they will use one of these affirmations to help them celebrate today.



Affirmations

For Families or Groups

- Read one **Celebration Affirmation Card** aloud each day to someone you want to give that special message to.
- Read one of the cards to yourself each morning during the holidays.
- Ask someone to pick a card. Read it aloud or act it out to that person.
- Hide the cards in plain view in the room. After people find the cards, the rest of the family or group reads aloud the found card to the finder.



Counting Game

For Children

- Children pick **Memory Jogger Cards** and count how many of each card's symbol they can find in and around their home.
- For younger children: Count the different symbols on each of the cards (i.e.: How many Christmas stockings are on the stockings card?)



Vocabulary Game

For Children

- Each child picks a **Memory Jogger Card** and explains what each of the symbols means or asks questions about it.

Celebrations

For Families or Groups

- Choose one **Memory Jogger Card** each day.
- Tell a favorite memory you have of that symbol.
- Tell how you wish your family would celebrate this symbol.
- If you pick a card with a symbol which your family does not celebrate, start a new tradition with it.
- When you choose the blank holly-bordered card, make a list of Christmas symbols that have been left out of these cards.

Carols 

Entertainment 

Giving

For Individuals or Families

- Find a **Memory Jogger Card** by which you can make a contribution to others (i.e.: **Giving card**... donate a Gift to the Santa Anonymous Foundation; **Ornament card**... make an ornament with your picture on it for someone who loves you; **Entertainment card**... plan a skit about some part of Christmas and give it as a present to your family on Christmas Eve.

Matching Game

For Individuals or Families

- Choose one **Celebration Card** each day and see how many of the **Memory Jogger Cards** seem to fit with the **Celebration Affirmation**.

Celebrate
the sounds of
Christmas 

Home 

Bedtime Stories

For Families

- Distribute the **Memory Jogger Card/Celebration Cards** equally among children and parents.
- Have the smallest person start the story by putting down one card and using it as the beginning of the story.
- Next, take turns adding to the story by using each of the cards to guide the story to its next sentence or part.
- Each time you tell a story it will be different. (What a great way to increase everyone's imagination and creativity!)

Christmas Charades

For Families or Groups

- Each person chooses or is dealt one **Memory Jogger Card** to act out so others can guess what it is.

Guests 

The Complete Parents' Guide to Telephone Medicine

by Jeffrey L. Brown, M.D.,
Putnam Publishing Group, N.Y., N.Y. 1988.

Reviewed by Ann Gesme, mother of Charlie, age 21 months.

This book is a great resource for parents with children of all ages. The book is divided into seven sections: using the telephone, common complaints, minor infections, infectious diseases, emergency problems, new infant care, and pediatric problems. General information, easy to follow steps for care, and instructions as to when to call the doctor are included for every topic listed.

The Complete Parents' Guide to Telephone Medicine includes discussion notes and contagion information which I have found to be helpful even after a diagnosis has been made. Often times I have had questions about an illness after a visit to the clinic or phone conversation with a doctor.

I have also found this book to be useful in instances where medical advice is not readily available. I was recently on vacation with my family and some friends, and after referencing the book, we were able to assess a medical situation quickly and with confidence.

The Complete Parents' Guide to Telephone Medicine is easy to use and would be a valuable addition to any parents' collection of childcare books.

Opening Activity

For focusing on the holidays

- Hand out name tags cut in the shape of a holiday symbol.
- Choose a partner. Make a name tag for him and ask him to tell you if there is one thing that he finds stressful about the holidays.
- Introduce your partner and tell the group one stressor if he is willing for you to share that information.

Closing Activity

That encourages people to pay attention to their own needs during the holidays

At the end of the meeting, briefly review the activities of the meeting.

- Ask those people who are willing to tell ways they will take care of themselves during the holidays.
- Ask for Resentments. Listen to resentments, do not defend or explain.
- Ask for Appreciations.

HOLIDAYS

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materials to use individually
or in support groups.

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Jean Clarke's Travel Schedule:

- October 30, 1992 - Honolulu, Hawaii
- November 3, 1992 - Sydney, Australia
- November 7, 1992 - New Zealand
- January 12, 1993 - Singapore
- January 16, 1993 - Kerala, India
- January 27, 1993 - London

Transactional Analysis Training

Four of a series of workshops on the psychological system of Transactional Analysis for beginners, for professionals, and for those who want to become certified Transactional Analysts.

February 19, 20, 21 - Transactions

March 19, 20, 21 - Games

April 16, 17, 18 - Discounting and Passivity

May 14, 15, 16 - The Drama Triangle

Write to **WE** for details on the workshops.

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