

Coping with COPD by Socializing in the Holiday Season **by Jo-Von Tucker**

'Tis the season... to enjoy Holiday socials and get together. But, I'll bet that you didn't know that socializing can help you to adjust to the realities of life with COPD!

A big problem faced by lung diseased patients has to do with a tendency to stay hidden at home. Some are embarrassed by their oxygen equipment. I know a COPD'er who won't take her portable O2 out of her car, and she carries it in the car on the floorboard covered with a blanket. Others may feel uncomfortable if they are overcome by a coughing spell in public. And some may just give up because of fatigue caused by getting bathed, dressed and ready to go out.

Holiday time is a time for merriment and good times, a time to visit with old and new friends, and a time to spend with family. And there are many opportunities for us to socialize through our communities, churches, synagogues and other associations. Lots of parties go on over the holiday season. *Carpe diem*. Seize the moment... to be social and active.

Don't "hole up" in your house, running the risk of becoming more and more despondent. Don't turn down invitations because you have COPD. Don't let yourself get pulled down emotionally by avoiding family gatherings or other social commitments.

Allow yourself to be caught up in the spirit of our best giving season. You'll be giving to yourself, as well as to those around you who look forward to your company. Be careful not to overload by taking on too many commitments, and pace yourself so that you've plenty of rest time in between. Open up your heart and your arms, and forget about that oxygen cannula. There is no reason to feel self-conscious about it.

Visiting will bring you much happiness and contentment. Like a good piece of chocolate, such happiness fills the soul as well as the body. Indulge yourself... allow your socializing experiences to lift you out of depression and into the light of peace and serenity.

And, this is a lesson that should not be restricted to Holidays. It is emotional therapy that will work for you all year long. Yes, it requires a little effort to socialize and to meet and greet people. Sure, you'll need to be presentable when you go out. Yep, we all know that you are fatigued... so are we! You can fight the winter doldrums, or the Holiday blues, or too much dwelling on the debilitation of COPD. Have friends over for hot chocolate and a game of Scrabble. Or put on your dancin' shoes and "chair dance" without getting short of breath! Be fierce in your determination to enjoy the opportunities for festivities.

This Holiday let's let our moods and spirits soar with the season, and be grateful that we can.