

Welcome Elizabeth Arnold, A.L.C.

Dothan Pediatric Clinic, Westgate Center, and Eufaula Pediatric Clinic are proud to announce the association of Elizabeth Arnold, A.L.C.

Elizabeth Arnold, A.L.C., joined our practice as an Associate Licensed Counselor in August 2011. She received her Masters Degree in Counseling and Psychology in May 2011 from Troy University Dothan. Elizabeth began her internship in August 2010 at Westgate Center as a graduate student at Troy University. Knowing that she was going to begin her internship in August 2010, she participated in SOI training for certification in facilitating the Structure of Intellect Program at Westgate Center in June 2010. The SOI Program is a specialized treatment program to help children improve academic performance. After she began her internship, a class of SOI students formed, Elizabeth facilitated that class and every class since then. She has helped 14 patients so far. After graduation in May 2011, she became licensed as an Associate Licensed Counselor in September 2011 and is currently under the supervision of Donda L. Goodson, L.P.C., Supervising Counselor. Elizabeth was hired by Westgate Center in June 2011 to continue to facilitate SOI and to help train staff on a new computer system while awaiting licensure.

Elizabeth enjoys going to the beach and the lake with friends, spending time with her nephews, watching Auburn Football and she loves dogs.

Appointments may be made with Elizabeth Arnold by calling Westgate Center at 334-699-3733 or 334-793-1881 extension 3.

Thank You for 30 Years

Dothan Pediatric Clinic, Westgate Center and Eufaula Pediatric Clinic are proud to honor Linda Knowles, Medical Laboratory Technician, as she celebrates her 30th year of service at Dothan Pediatric Clinic. Ms. Linda received her medical laboratory technician degree from Gadsden State in Gadsden, Alabama in 1980 and completed her internship at Baptist Hospital in Gadsden, Alabama. When asked how she started in the medical field she said she was always interested in the medical field so she went to a local hospital in Mississippi to see if she could do volunteer work and they told her they had a position open in the lab if she wanted to take it. She took the position and loved it so much she made it her lifelong career. In 1981, Ms. Linda moved to Dothan and started working for Dothan Pediatric Clinic. She has seen the clinic grow by leaps and bounds. Ms. Linda says that one of her pleasures now is to see children or grandchildren of former patients whom she helped years ago. She has seen and helped 2 generations who have come through Dothan Pediatric Clinic.

The providers and staff wish to thank Ms. Linda Knowles for her dedication and loyalty to the patients, the clinic, the staff and the providers over the past 30 years!

Holidays and Children of Divorce

It is difficult enough to go through a divorce when you have children, but during the holidays divorced parents often feel an increased amount of sadness and guilt caused by thoughts of the children not having both parents in the home to enjoy the holidays in what might be considered a traditional fashion. The custodial parent may face the children leaving for part of the holiday to spend time with the other parent. Sometimes the children may not want to leave the custodial parent, but must, according to the divorce decree, and it is painful to have to force the children to go. The noncustodial parent sometimes faces having the children only for a few hours during a holiday or not having them at all. If the divorced parents live far away from each other this poses an even greater risk of not seeing the children during the holidays. Guilt may be increased for both parents if they feel that they cannot provide the same quality/quantity of gifts that they could have provided if they were still together. These emotions can be worse for the parent who, during their own childhood, experienced what would be considered traditional holiday time with an intact family and who has good memories of those holidays. Parents who experience increased sadness and guilt may sometimes try to overcompensate for what they feel the children are missing by spending more money for gifts that they can't afford. Some parents have such difficulty dealing with the sadness and guilt and end up hardly celebrating at all during the holidays because they cannot get past their emotions. Children tend to be influenced by their parents' emotions, so, it is important to begin to deal with the negative feelings early, so your children can enjoy the holidays as much as possible. Sometimes professional help is necessary to deal with the painful emotions. For the noncustodial parent who may be alone during the holidays, it is important to avoid isolating, if at all possible, and to understand that it is very natural to feel greater sadness if you do not have your children with you at that time. It will be very important to have support during this time.

Below are a few suggestions to help deal with the Holiday Blues so you can meet your child's needs this Holiday Season.

Offer Understanding

Your children may feel blue about facing the Holidays without both parents in the home. Many times a parent will be unaware of how their children feel because the child holds back in order not to cause a parent discomfort.

As a parent, you can let your children know it is safe to express their feelings especially negative feelings. Show your children that you understand and that their feelings are normal. Your availability, willingness to listen and to validate their feelings will relieve a great amount of the sadness for your child.

Be Cordial To Your Ex

Your attitude toward your former spouse during this important time of the year will provide your children with hope that their parents can at least be friends. Parents who get along give their children the most important gift they will ever receive during the holidays and every other day of the year.

Involve Your Child in Decision Making

When parents divorce, children feel a lack of control. They have no voice in whether or not their family stays together. During Christmas and on other special occasions giving your children some control over how they spend their time lessens the stress of feeling out of control.

This can be especially important for older children. They may be scheduled to spend time with the non-custodial parent when they would rather be with friends. Give your child the option of bringing a friend along or planning activities with friends during their time with you. Take advantage of holiday visitation, but allow your child to have an active role in planning activities.

Keep It Simple

Do not over schedule. When kids are stressed and tired, they will whine and make life difficult. If you try to do everything and see everyone, you will wear-out your children. Go with the flow and stay in touch with the mood of your children.

Create New Holiday Traditions

Do away with holiday traditions that cause emotional pain for your children. Create new traditions with your children at home. Encourage the other parent to create traditions to share at their home, also.

Showing your children compassion for their sadness and teaching them coping skills will not only help them through the post-divorce holiday season, but also long after the holidays pass.

Winter Blues

The local forecast on television announces another imminent cold front. Staring out a frost-covered window watching snowflakes slowly accumulate on the ground, a heavy feeling squelches any sense of motivation you might have: The winter blues have officially settled in.

It is obvious your children feel the winter blues. Cooped up in the house, they become restless and soon find themselves getting into mischief. It seems their attention spans have contracted as much as your desire to do anything.

While some experts classify the depressed feeling which accompanies the change in seasons as “Seasonal Affective Disorder” or specifically “winter depression,” both children and adults experience some degree of melancholy as daylight hours diminish and colder temperatures set-in. Feeling trapped at home, some people blame the lack of sunlight for moodiness, disinterest in normal activities, weight gain and constant drowsiness.

According to statistics, “winter depression” affects approximately 6% of the United States population—about 1 in every 16—who feel “inexplicably” dispirited during the winter months. Even if the feeling is not enough to be classified as outright depression, between 10 to 20% of the U.S. population experience some form of “cabin fever.”

But with all the other worries that threaten to alter our attitudes—relationships, sick children, financial problems, etc.—must we let something as fickle as the weather dictate our mood?

Though it is true that serotonin and melatonin levels vary more drastically during the winter months, we must ensure to not over-elevate the feelings we experience. Winter is a time to be enjoyed with family and friends, if we take advantage of all it has to offer. Though it is scientifically proven that a bright, warm, sunny day can cause us to be more chipper, the attitude with which we approach the gray, winter days will determine whether we continue to be productive. This same positive attitude will wear off on our children as well.

During the winter, the earth rejuvenates itself and prepares to spring anew. Animals enter hibernation, permitting other species of flora and fauna to regenerate. Instead of being disheartened by the frosty forecast, be excited about the coming of this important time—look forward to the landscape’s re-coloration.

But just because nature goes into hibernation does not mean you have to as well! We were created to be active, and must continue that way throughout the year—whether the day is sunny or dreary. There are plenty of ways to keep our minds and bodies active during the wintertime—effectively warding off the winter blues that threaten to dampen our moods and limit productivity.

Be Proactive

Contrary to popular belief, winter should not be a time for laziness. Though gym memberships drop off industry-wide for three months during winter, you do not have to be a part of that statistic!

Of course, if icy roads pose safety risks, stay at home, but do not be inactive—this can lead to lethargy. Even if you are unable to go to the gym, doing an exercise video or lifting free weights are viable options.

Remember, your children will follow your example. If they see you sitting at home depressed about the weather, they will assume it is acceptable behavior. On the other hand, if you maintain the same energy level during the winter, the season's arrival will not faze them.

If you have children or younger siblings, build a pillow-fort with them or teach them a dance they can later perform for relatives. If you are not athletically inclined, crafts are a great way to occupy young minds and keep children continually learning. Use crafts to teach your children to think of others and express their creativity. The Internet is rife with ideas for children's indoor activities.

Being proactive also means organizing and prioritizing what you need to accomplish during the winter months. View winter as a time to catch up on all those indoor activities you could not bring yourself to do when the sun was shining brightly outside. What about those pictures from last year's family get-together that have been sitting in a box for the past year? Or that drawer of items you are not sure what to do with? Now is the perfect time to sort out the clutter that has accrued since summertime.

Be sure to include your children while organizing. Showing them the importance of order will help them manage their own lives later. Also, teaching them to be tidy will save you from having to clean up after them.

Whatever you do indoors, do not let the television trap you into thinking that winter is a good excuse for a continual date with the couch! Statistics show that children spend more time—44.5 hours per week!—in front of a screen than any other activity other than sleeping. This equates to just under 6.5 hours of media use per day—more hours than a five-day workweek!

In addition, researchers discovered that obesity in children and adults actually increases the more hours they watch television.

Winter can also be a time to show others that you care and to teach your children to do the same. Cooking a hot meal for an elderly couple can be a great way to help them ward off winter's biting chill.

Taking a moment to think of others will help eradicate the "woe is me" attitude that the winter blues can bring and give you a positive winter outlook.

Dive Into a Book

Just as it is important to be physically active, it is equally imperative to exercise your mind. New statistics from the National Endowment for the Arts show that reading improves quality of life and gives "children a better future, makes us more useful in the workforce, and encourages us to build our communities." Along with making you a more efficient employee, reading builds confidence and strengthens your comprehension and analytical skills. Studies have even shown that those who read regularly land higher paying jobs.

In this fast-paced world, less people are reading for enjoyment than ever before. What better way to travel to a new destination, augment your grammar skills and become more cultured than by reading a good book? Though television can show you new places, it does not expand your mind like a book.

Eat Healthy

Of course, none of the above activities can be accomplished without exercising proper eating habits. Given that winter is the time of high heating bills and increased auto expenses, we tend to lean toward cheaper processed foods that give us warmth, but have less vegetable content: heavy stews, casseroles, spaghetti, mashed potatoes—foods that pack on the pounds! Depending on where you live, vegetables may be difficult or expensive to obtain during winter. However, this does not diminish their importance! Consuming excessive portions of carbohydrates without adequate amounts of vegetables can lead to weight gain.

To combat the urge to eat for comfort, experiment with cooking different kinds of vegetables that may be cheaper to buy in the winter. Sweet potatoes can substitute starchy white potatoes, and are an excellent source of vitamin A and C, and antioxidants which help prevent sickness. Spend time with your children instructing them how to maintain a healthy diet. Teaching them to eat healthily when they are young will guarantee them a lifetime of good health.

The Most Active Time

Above all, never forget that winter is a time for fun and an opportunity to spend quality time with friends and family—regardless of the weather! Whether enjoying the chilly weather outdoors or doing activities indoors with loved ones, you will build memories to be cherished for years to come.

Next time you find yourself staring out the window, expressionless and full of self pity, think about the treasures that winter has to offer. Organize and prioritize your life indoors so that when the sunny weather comes, you and your children will be able to take advantage of summer's lovely rays.

Peds Happenings

- If your insurance requires a deductible, remember the calendar year deductible starts January 1. If your insurance is Tricare, your deductible starts October 1 of each calendar year.
- Parents are reminded that winter is our clinic's busiest time of year. Wait times may be longer and appointments may be more difficult to schedule. Our physicians, nurses and staff are here to assist you in any way possible. Thank you for your patience as we work through this busy time.
- Please remember to bring your insurance card to your visit so we can update your child's records.
- Dothan Pediatric Clinic participated in the 2011 Scarecrows in the Gardens at the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens with a display of Mother Goose and some of our favorites nursery rhymes, including Rock-a-Bye Baby, What are Little Girls Made Of?, What are Little Boys Made Of?, and Little Boy Blue. In addition to producing a scarecrow display that children and adults alike could enjoy, the display also supported the Reach Out and Read program that allows our pediatricians to give an age-appropriate book to children during their 6 month – 5 year check-ups.

- On November 12, Dothan Pediatric Clinic and Westgate Center were in the National Peanut Festival Parade with a float in keeping with the theme of the 2011 National Peanut Festival: PEANUTS: We Dig 'Em!. Our float was filled with the PEANUTS Gang: Charlie Brown (Matt Wirt), Snoopy (Ben Freeman), Lucy (Haley Smith), Sally (April Mock), Linus (Hunter Mercer), Schroeder (Jayse McCallister), Peppermint Patty (Chelsea Norman) and Snoopy's closest friend, Woodstock. Hoping for applause from the audience and a possible award for best float, Snoopy was digging in his dog bowl filled with peanuts throughout the parade route.
- Dothan Pediatric Clinic participated in the annual Dothan Downtown Christmas on December 3 providing a marshmallow-roasting tent for citizens of all ages. Hundreds of families roasted a marshmallow on an open fire on N. Foster Street where DPC staff members then helped them make 'Smoers.
- Eufaula Pediatric Clinic participated in the annual Downtown Eufaula Christmas Parade with "A Charlie Brown Christmas" float filled with the entire PEANUTS Gang and a small, Christmas tree with one red ornament. Families from Eufaula and Barbour County cheered as the EPC float both entertained and reminded each one to see the meaning of Christmas beyond the commercialization.

Please note the clinic will be closed on the following days:

Dothan Pediatric Clinic

Sunday, December 25, 2011
Christmas Day

Sunday, January 1, 2012
New Year's Day

Westgate Center

Friday, December 23, 2011
Closed

Monday, December 26, 2011
Closed until 1:00 pm

Dothan Pediatric Clinic office hours:

Monday-Friday: 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Saturday: 8:00 am - 11:00 am - sick children only on a walk-in basis

Sunday: 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm - sick children only on a walk-in basis

Westgate Center-Behavioral and Counseling office hours:

Monday-Thursday: 8:00 am - 6:00 pm

Friday: 8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Eufaula Pediatric Clinic office hours:

Monday-Friday: 8:00 am - 5:00 pm