



## Grant Yourself Permission & Grace December 2022

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Dear friends:

I recently shared the following story on the morning show with Dale Jones on WZBG and thought I'd reprise it here...

To celebrate my recent birthday, my husband Greg and I drove to Boston to dine with our oldest daughter Emma and her friends. We were to meet at an Italian restaurant in the north end around 6pm. Traffic that night was substantial, owing to a wind and rain storm, Friday night in Boston and a Celtics game. In trying to find parking, we circled the restaurant and surrounding neighborhood a couple of painstakingly slow times to no avail - other than an obnoxiously priced \$50 per car "event" lot across from the game. I felt myself getting increasingly crabby as the precious time with Emma and her friends was being lost to this inane pursuit. I finally yelled, "I don't care how much it costs, I need to get out of this \$&@! car NOW!"

In the lead up to my birthday I had noticed that I wasn't feeling very joyful; in fact I was anxious and irritable; which is unusual for me. I've always loved my birthday and the holidays. It also felt incongruent to current life events because many wonderful things were happening that would typically bring incredible feelings of gratitude and happiness. The discomfort persisted...so I did some deeper reflecting to determine what was going on. Not only did I not want to subject Greg to another meltdown, we can't afford to keep spending that obscene amount on parking!

So I started with the "felt sense". I found where the center of the discomfort was residing in my body - sitting directly on my heart. There was a heaviness on my chest and I recognized it as soon as I took the time to sit with it: grief. It's been ten years since my mom passed away and my birthdays have been bittersweet ever since. My mom had an extraordinary way of making birthdays magical; she'd communicate that special sense of fully seeing and celebrating you with every act and gift. Even as a 54 year-old woman with a full life, I was missing her. I allowed myself a chance to recall, to cry and to share stories. The heaviness on my heart dissipated and I gained access to the full range of emotions that had been blunted.

My sincerest wish for you, dear friends, is that you grant yourselves permission and grace to recognize and embrace your feelings. It's tempting to shove them way, waaay down and delay addressing them until you're "ready". But, trust me when I say, the painful stuff always shows up in full force when it is ignored or unprocessed. It also has a nasty habit of stifling happiness as well. Don't let

it! Please consider the approaches in this month's article as a possible positive and proactive path forward.

Wishing you and yours a very full and healthy 2023!

With all my gratitude,

Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW  
President & CEO

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## It's Okay Not to Feel Merry & Bright

Seasonal depression, dealing with loss, trauma, economic challenges, and complicated relationships can make this time of year lose a little of its sparkle. You may notice that you haven't been feeling right, possibly snapping at your loved ones more often, reaching for a drink or other substance to numb yourself. Maybe you wanted to fast forward through the holidays or skip them all together.



Our culture tells us that the best thing to do is to stuff our feelings and try to forget about them. However, it is part of the human to experience a wide range of emotions. Learning how to manage intense reactions, the desire to escape, and attempting to figure out where the pain or discomfort is coming from is worth all the hard work.

## The Window of Tolerance

Coined by Dan Siegel, a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, the Window of Tolerance describes the range of intensities of emotional experiences that you can comfortably respond to. Some people have a wide window, while for others it is quite narrow.

When you experience an emotion that throws you off kilter you can become overwhelmed, get angry, experience anxiety, shut down, or feel shameful. Thankfully there are exercises we can do to expand our Window of Tolerance and get better at processing our experiences.

## Practice = Progress

It takes practice and patience to get to the bottom of our feelings, but it is important to do the hard work to figure out what is going on and where the pain is coming from. Practice the following:

- Recognize it! It's okay to feel whatever it is you are feeling!
- Before you escape (reach for a glass of wine or lash out), take a few deep breaths and ground yourself by identifying three things that you can hear, see, touch or smell.
- Find out where the discomfort is it is in your body. Is it your heart, are your shoulders tight, is your anxiety increasing, are you clenching your jaw?
- Recognize that you are sturdy enough to sit with it and let the feelings pass. They may not go away completely, but the intense emotions will lessen.
- Extend yourself grace and compassion.
- Find someone to share and process your feelings.

When we have a healthy tolerance and are able stay within this window, we thrive, relate well to ourselves, and can extend grace and compassion to others. It's normal to have complicated feelings; practicing how to increase our tolerance of these emotions will allow us to experience all the joy life has to offer.

If you need support this holiday season, please reach out to us or one of the numbers below:

McCall 860.496.2100

Dial 988 for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (you do not have to be suicidal to receive support)

In CT dial 211 for resources



## 2022 Annual Appeal ~ We Need Your Help!!

We are still short of our goal to raise \$20,000 for Adolescent Mental Health Services. The need for these services is so great, that we are again asking for your help.

**Your moment is NOW!** 100% of your gift will help ensure **every** teen has access to evidence-based, affordable behavioral healthcare.

You are helping to change the trajectory of a young person's life for the better and I cannot thank you enough for being part of our caring community.

### Your moment is now!

- **If you can, donate!** Every little bit counts!!
- **Share the campaign.** Another way you can help is by sharing the campaign with your family and friends. Go to our [FB](#) or [IG](#) page, @mccall.bhn, and share our posts!
- **Use AmazonSmile to Support McCall for Free!** Did you know that you can have Amazon match 0.5% of your purchases in donations to McCall? At [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), you can choose a charitable organization of your choice to receive donations from Amazon, and it doesn't cost you anything. There are only two steps:
  - First, go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), and choose McCall Foundation as the agency to support.
  - Second, buy things. You need to shop on [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) instead of regular [amazon.com](https://amazon.com), and not every item is eligible.

If you have any questions please reach out to Marisa Mittelstaedt, Director of Development and Marketing, [marisa.mittelstaedt@mccallbhn.org](mailto:marisa.mittelstaedt@mccallbhn.org).

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## WZBG Interview with Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, President & CEO

This month our President & CEO was interviewed by Dale Jones on WZBG. They discussed steps you can take to help get through the holidays and process your emotions. Click on the image to listen! Tune in on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 8:20 to hear us in real-time.

TOPIC:  
IT'S OKAY NOT  
TO FEEL MERRY  
& BRIGHT

WEDNESDAY  
DEC 21  
8:20 AM

**NEW INTERVIEW**



WITH MARIA COUTANT SKINNER, LCSW, PRESIDENT & CEO

IF THEY HOLIDAYS AREN'T FEELING MERRY & BRIGHT,  
PLEASE KNOW THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE. TUNE IN TO  
LEARN HOW MCCALL CAN HELP!

MCCALLBHN.ORG

 



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