

LAW OFFICES OF KIM MICHAEL CULLEN, P.A.
PERSONAL INJURY - WRONGFUL DEATH

LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE LAW

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

I hope this edition of our newsletter reaches each of you after you have enjoyed a restful and restorative holiday. My family and I spent our first Christmas season at home in many years, and it was great. With a large extended family like we have, it is sometimes easy for us to forget that it is the traditions and customs that we establish with our own children that will (hopefully) keep them coming back home when they grow up and out of our household. I guess only time will tell how well we've done.

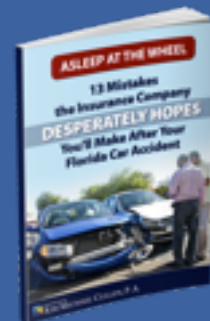
In the meantime, I am very excited about 2011. We are blessed to have several very interesting injury and insurance cases to work on here at the firm. We also have some ambitious plans for this newsletter -- *Life, Liberty, and the Law*. One of the first things you will notice is our effort this year to bring in expert guest columnists. In addition, in several future editions we will be highlighting some interesting people and businesses we've been exposed to across Central Florida. This issue actually covers both bases. I am very pleased and proud to welcome Jennifer Sigman as both our *first* guest expert, and as someone who is doing very interesting work in our community.

Jennifer Sigman has a family and marital therapy practice in Maitland. I first came across Jennifer in connection with her treatment of children who had suffered the sudden and devastating loss of a parent, but her practice is much more broad than that. In this issue, I have asked Jennifer to provide some professional tips about handling stress as we start the year. You won't want to miss what she suggests.

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Would You Really Make Lemonade With This Lemon?

I bet I'm not the only one who enjoys going to a restaurant and getting a slice of lemon in my glass of Diet Coke or ice water. It just seems to make the drink more refreshing. But I may not be doing that anymore. Here's why:

Anne LaGrange Loving, a professor of science at Passaic County Community College, was pretty grossed out when she saw a waitress' fingers dip into her soda as she brought the drink to her table. This prompted Loving to perform a research study to find out exactly how clean the lemon garnish provided with many restaurant drinks actually is.

Loving began by taking samples from 76 lemons that were served in north New Jersey restaurants -- one sample from the rind and the other along the pulp -- before the customers had a chance to put

their hands or mouths on their drinks. The restaurants were unaware that she was doing this research and the swabs were sent off to a clinical microbiology lab.



The lab results showed a total of 25 different types of germs were found on 53 of the 76 lemons sampled. The germs ranged from fecal in origin (possibly from dirty employee hands, or unwashed meat on cutting boards) to types found in saliva, on the skin and in the environment.

Although the amount of germs probably wouldn't make most people sick, if you have a weakened immune system, you might want to reconsider that lemon slice the next time you order a drink.



Check Fraud

Recently, my wife had her purse stolen from her car, including her checkbook. The thief tried to write checks from our account and actually got one check paid before we could close the account. These tips might help you to lessen your

chances of the same happening to you.

- Use Your Initials - Don't have your first and middle name put on your checks when ordering from the bank. Thieves will be less confident in signing your checks.
- Don't just throw away credit card receipts - shred them.
- When paying a credit card bill, write only the last four digits of your account on your check.

- Review all checks and statements - you can catch inappropriate transactions.
- Report a stolen wallet or checks to your financial institution and the local police. They will give you phone numbers to appropriate check cashing companies to further prevent damage to your account.

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Jennifer Sigman, LMFT
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
 Orlando Therapy Project
 940 North Maitland Ave
 Maitland, Florida 32751
 (407) 415-9017
OTherapyProject@aol.com
www.OrlandoTherapyProject.com

Reduce Your Stress Symptoms: A Little Adds Up to A Lot!

I've seen it in my practice for 20 years, this time of the year can lead many people to feel more burdened than joyous. Limited finances, health or relationship concerns, loneliness and apprehension about the New Year can lead to anxiety or depression. It can even lead to physical issues like increased blood pressure or heart attacks. You should not take it for granted that this anxiety "comes with the season". There are things you can do to stabilize and improve your mental health and physical well being. Here are five easy tips to remember now and throughout the New Year that will

improve your outlook on your physical and emotional well being...

Control what you can control.

This is the most important tip anyone can give you. Look around and notice the people who are moving gracefully through tough and busy times, I assure you they are working this tip. Make a list, make a plan, and prioritize yourself. Here's the trick, hold this gently and be flexible. Let go of the things you can't control.

Eat and drink mindfully.

Overeating, especially carbohydrates and simple sugars can cause headaches, cardiac fluctuations and hypertension. Increased caffeine and alcohol during the holidays can intensify or even mimic anxiety and depression symptoms. Too much caffeine can cause shortness of breath and increased heart rate- sometimes up to 4 hours later. Here's what to do... eat with a plan. Taste many things and fill up on few. Listen to what your body is telling you. Choose protein over carbohydrates and don't go to bed right after a meal. Think about your choices, go slow and remember, this is not your last meal.

Exercise. Besides being good for your heart, lungs and brain (research shows that increased blood flow to the brain has a multitude of significant advantages) some simple physical activity can produce enough endorphins to temporarily bring down your stress level. The endorphins eat up the extra stress hormones in our body! Don't make this tough (unless you're already very active). Make it nice and do-able. Every step or activity

counts! Just get your heart rate up a little...or a lot.

Breathe. This sounds so simple but we do it wrong all the time, especially when we're under pressure. Learn to breathe correctly and you can control your mind and body. Long slow breaths in through the nose, count slowly as high as you can. Long slow breaths out through the nose, again counting as high as you can. Now repeat and add one more number. Listen to the sound of your breath. You should hear the sound both as you inhale and as you exhale. Do this for 3- 5 minutes. Over time, as your lung capacity increases, so will your ability to count higher.

Sleep. Darken the room and turn off the computer, TV and cell phone. Through deep sleep, which happens during REM sleep (Rapid Eye Movement), physically and emotionally our bodies restore and recuperate. During sleep our body releases growth hormones for healing and repair. Try going to bed 10-15 minutes earlier than usual. Listen to the sound of your breath and let your body rest. Reflect on 3 things you are appreciative for and enjoy the moment.

Remember, if you're already burdened with other life issues (a divorce, chronic health diagnosis, job loss, a recent death or accident) your physiology is more sensitive and at risk to affect your mental health and physical well being. Now is the time to control everything you can and practice these tips. Set yourself up for success. Do a little every day. You don't have to do it perfectly or even well, the success comes when (as Nike says) you "Just Do It!"

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Addicted to Guzzlers?

With large marketing budgets and plenty of positive media buzz, it would be easy to think that the electric Chevy Volt and Nissan Leaf automobiles were taking America by storm. But new figures released by the automobile research firm Autodata show that U.S. car buyers are still slurping up the gas guzzlers.

According to Autodata, sales of mid-size sport utility vehicles like the Jeep Grand Cherokee and Honda Pilot jumped 41 percent in 2010. Meanwhile sales of fuel-sippers like the Honda Civic and Toyota Prius fell 1.7 percent.



Mike Jackson, the CEO of AutoNation, put it this way: “You have about 5 percent of the market committed to fuel efficiency, but the other 95 percent will give up 5 mpg to get a better cup holder.

Changes are on the way though. Tough new fuel efficiency standards are going to force design changes to vehicles -- whether consumers love them or not.

Until then, gas prices seem to be the main catalyst. Make Jackson compared it to broccoli and donuts: “Most people are going to go for the donuts, even though they cost more, and even though they know it's not good for them.”

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Law Offices of Kim Michael Cullen, P.A.

1219 E. Livingston St.

Orlando, FL 32803

THANK YOU

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