

A12 Therapy group offers help for the holidays

BY GABE HERMAN
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Just in time for the holidays, the Foundation for Positive Psychology is hosting a series of workshops in Lower Manhattan to help people learn to interact constructively with difficult relatives, or any relationship in need of repairs.

The workshops are hosted by Niseema Diemer and Kevin O'Donoghue, mental health experts at the nonprofit at 119 West 57th St. They also host the Positive Mind Radio Show, based on the concepts of Positive Psychology that include listening without judgment and being open to understanding and empathizing with the other person.

Positive Psychology dates back to 1996 and is based on the theories of psychologist Martin Seligman. The idea is to move emphasis away from a client's negativity or the symptoms being felt,



PHOTO COURTESY OF FOUNDATION FOR POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY
Niseema Diemer and Kevin O'Donoghue, hosts of the Safe Conversations workshops.

according to O'Donoghue. "We focus on the strengths the client has to combat the symptoms," he said. "It's goal-directed psychotherapy, using the strength of the client rather than the client's deficit."

The therapist looks to re-

mind the patient of his or her strengths, and how to use them as a resource.

The techniques are not for people with serious issues, like major depression or anxiety that requires medication, noted O'Donoghue. "It's not a be-

all and end all therapy for all people at all times, but it's typically useful for people who are mildly impaired or struggling," he said.

The radio show tries to help callers focus on their strengths and harness their own healing power while

avoiding negativity.

"People do not get better unless they feel a sense of hope. You have to feel that internally," said O'Donoghue. "The client begins to sense they're not alone and that gives them hope."

The Positive Mind Radio Show has moved to a new time slot, on Tuesdays from 11 a.m. to noon, on WBAI. Although the station has recently announced cuts, O'Donoghue said the nonprofit has gone through similar issues before, and he expects the station to resume soon and the show to be on every Tuesday.

O'Donoghue and Diemer are also hosting "Safe Conversations" workshops at the Padma Meditation & Holistic Center, at 6 West 14 St. The workshops are open to all kinds of relationships, said Diemer, including couples, co-workers, relatives or anyone looking to form a deeper and better connection.

Before people express frustrations at the workshop, they first must say something they appreciate about the other person, "so we don't get into the cycle of hurting each other," Diemer said.

The goal of the workshop is for people to learn about their partner and ways to better care for the person, Diemer said. This is done by listening openly and without judgement, which can be difficult at first for many.

But people learn over the course of the workshops, which run from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and they come away with good experiences and listening techniques, O'Donoghue said. Listeners may summarize back what they've been told, as one way to show they understand what their partner said.

More information about the workshops can be found at tfpp.org/new-events.

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