



**A Therapist's
Referral Guide
for
Taking It Lightly**

“Having gone through the weekend, I found it personally a very valuable experience in my own growth and am comfortable recommending it to clients... I see it as an excellent supplement to traditional therapy. It serves to push through blocks that may take a long time to get through in one-on-one therapy – and the client can then continue therapy to make their gains stick.”

Dick Goldberg, MSSW

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- Margaret Pofahl, MSW, *Milwaukee, WI (262)*

(CI indicates Certified Instructor for Taking It Lightly)

Many of the people who take *Taking It Lightly* and *Taking It Lightly - Renewal* are recovering from traumas in their lives and are financially in need. We are most grateful to all of the people who contribute to the Starfish Foundation, a 501(c)(3) tax exempt foundation which provides funds for those unable to pay for their participation in these programs. If you would like to make a contribution to Starfish Foundation or know of a potential donor to Starfish Foundation, please contact Patricia Clason at 414-374-5433 or patricia@starfishfound.org



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Dear therapist,

Thank you for considering referral of your clients to the ***Taking It Lightly*** weekend. We have been offering these weekend personal growth programs since 1983, receiving hundreds of referrals from therapists.

This booklet has been prepared with the assistance of therapists who have made multiple referrals to ***Taking It Lightly***. Some of them have participated in the weekend themselves, either before or after referring their clients.

We are honored that we have been entrusted with referrals and we will work as closely with the referring therapist as requested to support the therapeutic process and the success and satisfaction of both therapist and client.

If you have any questions that are not answered here, please feel free to contact our offices. If you would like to speak to a therapist who has referred clients to our programs, we will be happy to arrange that for you.

Thank you again for your interest and for your concern for the well-being of your client.

Sincerely,

Patricia Clason
Director
Center for Creative Learning, LLC

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A Narrative Description of *Taking It Lightly*

The *Taking It Lightly* course was developed by Patricia Clason after twelve years of specialized training and many personal growth experiences. It is based on the concepts of 100% personal responsibility and full and free expression of our emotions.

There are two instructors and 10 assistants and a maximum of 12 new students. This is a ratio of 1 instructor/assistant to every student, which means lots of love, support and observation of students.

The course begins on a Friday evening at 7 p.m. and ends before midnight. The evening is spent exploring what's working and not working to our satisfaction in our lives and what can be gotten from the weekend. A short lecture explains how the mind works and how we develop belief systems that continue to affect our lives, often in a unconscious or subconscious way. The lecture also explains why we close down our emotions and how to open up again to being okay with our feelings. An activity between participants on what we did as children to survive, emotionally or physically, helps to make them more aware of the decisions they made about life.

There is also an activity on giving and receiving acknowledgements and criticisms and a discussion about the importance of being right and how it affects our lives. The evening closes with tape – a sort of bedtime story – from our bear friend, Spinoza.

Saturday starts at 9 a.m. with completion after dinner (based on number of students). Most of the time is spent doing emotional release work around the decisions made when we were children. This work involves re-experiencing those decisions. For example, at the age of five, a child's parents had a big fight, yelling and screaming and throwing things. The child thought for sure they were going to kill each other. So the child goes into the basement to hide. At that time, the

child might have made a decision to never get so angry, because it wasn't safe. Or maybe at age four, mom told the child to clean his/her room. The angry child said no. Mom beat the child, saying "Don't ever to talk back to me again!" The child may have made several different decisions – "It's not okay to say what I want" or "it is not safe to get angry."

In any of those circumstances, the child makes a decision to hold back on emotions. Later in life, the adult doesn't get angry – or doesn't ask for what he/she wants – and then gets resentful and covertly angry. One day the adult blows up over some little thing, hurts someone or destroys something.

In the course, the student might re-enact a previous circumstance, using the skills and awareness of the present-day adult self, to do it differently and make a new choice. Each person works in a different way.

This part of the weekend will probably be one of the most difficult things the student has ever done. They will also find it to be one of the most powerful and rewarding experiences they'll ever have.

What makes the weekend so powerful is that students experience – logically and emotionally – that they can CHOOSE how they will live their life. As a result of their own work and working with the other students, they integrate over and over again that they have the ability to take charge of their life and take responsibility for getting what they want.

After the emotional release work, each participant will do | the following Declaration to celebrate their new decision (feeling fully and expressing fully all of the concepts and emotions in the Declaration).

Declaration of Independence

My mind loved to be the victim. I felt sad and bored, or angry. And I blamed everyone. Now I know why!
I was so afraid to love that I decided _____ (student

inserts earlier decision) in order to survive.
So What !?! Now, I choose to be ALIVE!

Sunday begins at 9 a.m. We review what has happened over the weekend and work with making new decisions, setting action steps or goals for how to make the new decision real in our lives. Then we do a forgiveness letter, clearing out the heart and making room for more love. The group completes this portion of the weekend with an acknowledgement process that reinforces their bonding as a group. The day ends with a graduation celebration (at 6 p.m.) with other *Taking It Lightly* graduates and friends and family of those who have just completed the weekend.

Also included in the course fee is a one-on-one follow-up session with an instructor from the Center. The purpose of this session is to see how the student is doing with their new decision and to get their feedback on the course. We also will ask about the on-going process of personal growth and offer to assist in any way we can, including referrals to other types of work and/or support of their process with their therapist.

Approximately one month after the course, the class will meet again for a completion seminar and class reunion. This is an opportunity for students to reconnect with their friends and share how they are doing. The reunion includes a short lecture on getting results and a visit from Spinoza. Additionally, during the reunion, the group may decide to form a support group to meet monthly.

Also included in the program fee are the six Successful Living evening seminars on the following topics:

- Getting What You Really Want – *goals, procrastination, action*
- Using Your Words Wisely – *the power of words and affirmations*
- There is More to Money than Dollars – *laws of prosperity and abundance*

- When Your Word Becomes Law – *integrity and accountability*
- Creating Healthy Relationships – *how to recognize dysfunctional patterns & change them*
- Time and Stress Management – *tips for making life more efficient and more fun*

There's more... "Tune-up" sessions are offered monthly. These are self-help support group meetings wherein graduates can continue the work they started in the course, or just be with friends, get hugs, get encouragement or give support and encouragement to others. These sessions are optional and graduates can participate at any time.

So you see, the course fee of \$470 includes so much more than just a weekend. Graduates will have available a community of friends and many opportunities to continue their personal growth. Being a graduate of the weekend also includes discounts on other workshops offered at the Center, participation in our annual picnic and regular newsletters and calendar of events.

Additional programs offered:

- Renewal/Taking It Lightly – *a weekend for Sexual Abuse Survivors*
- Step Into the Light – *an advanced weekend on personal responsibility and releasing blame*
- Walking in the Light – *a weekend on team building and contribution*
- Dancing in DeLight – *a weekend focused on creative arts and expression of our potential*
- Professional Excellence Program – *ten month facilitator training program*
- Professional Development Programs – *open enrollment and in-house training programs on many business topics including management skills, communications, time and stress management, negotiations, creativity, ethics*

Taking It Lightly – Renewal
A weekend dedicated to sexual abuse issues

We found that over 50% of the students in Taking It Lightly had issues related to sexual abuse, even though the presenting issues were often dysfunctional relationships and generalized dissatisfaction in life. The underlying issues related to the abuse needed specialized attention and so we referred our graduates to therapists who worked in that field.

The graduates wanted a weekend similar to Taking It Lightly so they could do the emotional release work directly related to the sexual abuse – and they indicated they would feel safest doing this in a group focused on that area. So “Taking It Lightly – Renewal” was created.

The instructors and staff of the weekend are all abuse survivors who have worked extensively in their own recovery. In this special weekend, we focus on working with the shame, anger and grief associated with sexual abuse.

We are committed to working with the student's therapist as much as is needed or requested both before and after the weekend to insure the student's emotional and physical safety during the weekend and integration of their work after the weekend.

Taking It Lightly Renewal is offered in April and October of each year.

A Therapist's View of *Taking It Lightly*

The weekend is an intensive personal growth experience during which each individual participant accesses and releases repressed feelings with the help and support of the instructors, staff and other group members. Participants then are encouraged to make decisions to be more alive and to reinforce those decisions by designing and committing to specific actions.

Underlying the program are two fundamental principles:

1. Full and free expression of emotion as communication of one's aliveness (accessing and expressing blocked emotions as essential to physical and emotional well-being); and
2. Complete personal responsibility for one's own life, consistently linking emotions and action to integrity and accountability.

The change-producing process itself often includes elements of psychodrama, helping the student to identify emotions and decisions and then move through fears to create richer, more effective self-expression. Several key elements ensure that the process succeeds:

- ◆ highly trained (and remarkably skilled) instructors who help students safely experience and then accept previously rejected feelings;
- ◆ a well-designed group structure that emphasizes personal choice (including what and how much to change) and emotional safety;
- ◆ active assistance of the facilitators team who demonstrate and enhance an atmosphere of safety, support and compassion.

The process is extended through activities that focus upon continued change. Students are encouraged to follow up, using the support potential in fellow group members and other community resources once the weekend is finished.

Many *Taking It Lightly* students pursue therapy after the course to continue to integrate their work. Those already in therapy find their therapeutic work enhanced and enriched. Graduates are also offered continued support through group sessions called “Tune-ups.”

The weekend experience is highly effective in assisting students in integrating the productive choices they make in therapy. It enhances one-on-one therapy, creates greater personal integration and self-acceptance, frees awareness and expression of emotions, improves taking responsibility for one’s own growth, and clarifies issues that remain unresolved.

How do you know when to refer a client into the weekend?

- Refer children as young as 12 years old with good ego strength and adults as old as 90 in good health.
- A parent should be at the weekend with his/her child or teen – either on the team, in the weekend program or reviewing, being supportive and committed to healing.
- Children, teens and adults who would be going back home to an abusive, unsafe environment are discouraged from attending.

People are ready to be referred into the weekend if they:

- Feel stuck
- Want more effective interpersonal relationships
- Are shut down or so emotional they are afraid they’ll “never stop crying”

“As a therapist who has referred clients to the Center, I am awed by the progress my clients are able to make after an intensive weekend. Having taken the weekend myself, I feel an abundance of gratitude for the gifts that I have received, personally and professionally.”

Margaret Pofahl, ACSW, Psychotherapist

- Hold so much anger that they are not safe, afraid in relationships (e.g., verbalizing threats to hurt/kill, work rage, road rage, acting out aggressively, rage at own kids)
- Are in grief and have trouble expressing it
- Have high anxiety due to repressed emotions
- Are unable emotionally to give or receive love
- Are afraid or unable to be close
- Have trust issues
- Report shaming/parenting problems with their own children
- Are looking for a “jump-start” in their therapy

Does length of time in therapy matter?

If so, how long?

What matters more than the amount of time a person has been in therapy is that the client has a good working connection with their therapist.

The earlier in the therapy process a client enters *Taking It Lightly*, the earlier the client is desensitized to intense emotions – his/her own and others’. The client tends to:

- Be more open to “process work” in individual and group therapy;
- Continue the work by attending follow-up evenings and other intensive weekends;
- Feel more satisfied with therapy;
- Continue therapy until treatment is finished.

There are those who are not ready to do *Taking It Lightly* at the onset of their therapy and may need 3-4 months of further assessment and treatment. Some individuals need a referral to a psychiatrist or their family doctor for evaluation and medication to stabilize prior to *Taking It Lightly*. Students are encouraged to obtain the support of their treatment provider(s) before attending the weekend.

Conditions that should be present when referring a client:

- Some therapists prepare clients by telling them that they will do forms of psychodrama and must be motivated to face their fears and demons. If they don't feel strong enough, or the therapist doesn't feel they are emotionally strong enough, then they work on that to get ready.
- Motivation and desire to change must be present. There are no quick fixes.
- Client has a personal support system or would use the Center for Creative Learning community as a support system.
- Good therapist connection.
- Reasonably good ego boundaries.
- It may be important to know the instructors and/or course supervisor if you or the client have concerns.
- Staff team members and their age may be a concern. For example, if you have an adolescent client, then it may be helpful to have an adolescent on the team. If you have a client with severe sexual or other trauma, you may prefer not to have an adolescent on the team. Sometimes clients have not wanted to do the weekend when they know an adolescent or child is present on the team or as a student.
- You should not refer people who:
 - ◆ are calling 2-3 times per week in crisis
 - ◆ could become destabilized
 - ◆ are still using drugs/alcohol
 - ◆ have poor ego strength
 - ◆ are "dead" or have "no affect", "no life", "nothing inside"

"Taking It Lightly is incredibly well done. It works! Quite apart from an opening up, healing experience in and of itself, it clarifies the next steps for personal growth. The group process is outstanding... In short, I see the course as extremely helpful for either personal growth or as an adjunct to therapy."

Chuck Heikkinen, PhD, Psychologist

- Always trust your clinical judgment. Take time with the diagnostic and assessment processes to know whether *Taking It Lightly* is appropriate. Feel free to call the professional staff for consultation as part of the screening process for *Taking It Lightly*.

What issues need to be cleared up, integrated, etc., for a client to be ready for the weekend?

The client should...

- Be willing to do what is necessary to regain his/her self-confidence and integrity, e.g., willing to face fears with support.
- Show an ability to stabilize oneself emotionally. Suicidal and homicidal clients are not appropriate for the weekend.
- Want to overcome fear of judgment and fear of being in front of a group.
- Clear up any confidentiality concerns.
- Be assured of the right to choice at all times.
- Be willing to deal with (and release) past negative experiences they may have had in therapy, groups, personal growth seminars, marathons, “cult-like” groups.
- Work with initial crises and what brought him/her to treatment through to the point of stabilization.
- Assess any addictions, the need for psychiatric evaluation or medications (with the help of the therapist).
- Have adequate ego strength.

It helps to do one or more early recollections with the client to help him or her focus. The technique is to have the client recall a significant memory, what happened, at what age, and how he/she felt at that time and answer the following:

- ◆ “Life is...”
- ◆ “I am...”
- ◆ “Others are... Men are... Women are...”
- ◆ “So therefore, in order to survive, I decided...”

Often the client is amazed to recognize various survival decisions are still operating in the present or coloring his/her perceptions. It is helpful to point-blank ask what his/her goal is for the weekend. And we have found it helpful to tell the client, with their permission, what our goal is for them.

For clients with a high need to control, it is important to encourage the client to give self-permission to be in the moment and process what comes.

Are some presenting issues more suitable to the weekend than others?

Yes. These include...

- Lack of trust/betrayal
- Asking for help
- Anger
- How to be effective with personal assertiveness
- Separation and divorce
- Grief and loss
- Sexual abuse, assault or rape
- Domestic violence (if the victim is out of danger)
- Shame
- ACOA
- Growing up with “crazy” or unstable parents
- Job dissatisfaction
- Marital/relationship conflicts
- Parenting conflicts
- Crisis in meaning and purpose
- Need to mature

“The tools I learned in the weekend have been of great value when put to use at home, in my office and with my patients. I highly recommend the course to anyone who wishes to know themselves and others better, and to get more powerful and meaningful relationships.”

David Rosenberg, D.O.

- To remember one's spiritual connection
- Depression, anxiety, and panic
- Recovering from trauma
- Fear of love/closeness
- Mistrust or rage at the same or other sex

What desired results might a client be seeking that would be guideposts for a referral to the weekend?

- Anger and stress management
- A greater understanding of "family of origin" dynamics
- A clearer awareness of forgiveness for self and others
- Resolution and inner peace around presenting issues
- Opportunity for client to "act out" fear, anger, sense of violation, etc., vs. the defense of keeping all this in.
- It is safe and OK to feel and express emotions
- It is safe to grow up
- Validation of self
- Clarity of the right to need and get needs met
- Feeling deserving of love
- It is OK to be close
- To reclaim one's bonding needs
- To remember one's innocence
- To experience inner Light and to reconnect with Spirit
- To feel empowered
- To let go
- To forgive self, others, and God (as they understand God)
- To find his or her voice
- To trust his or her own experience, intuition, etc.

What medications, or types of medications or situations, might preclude a client from attending?

- Any heavy prescriptions of tranquilizers, sedatives, narcotics (for pain) may inhibit and lessen the experience.
- Clients on anti-psychotics need to be assessed for safety.

- Suicidal clients who are on anti-anxiety medications are a safety concern.
- Screen for:
 - ◆ individual and family history of mental illness
 - ◆ psychiatric hospitalizations
 - ◆ self-harm or suicide attempts
 - ◆ psychosis
 - ◆ drug and alcohol abuse
 - ◆ own or family history of psychotropic medication
- As a general rule, if a person meets DSM-IV criteria for personality disorders (vs. tendencies) they are not appropriate for the weekend. Personality disorders to exclude are:
 - ◆ Paranoid, schizoid or schizotypal
 - ◆ Antisocial, borderline, histrionic or narcissistic
 - ◆ Dependent, avoidant or obsessive-compulsive
- Screen out:
 - ◆ Bi-polar mood disorder unless client is on medication, stable for a minimum of six months and has approval of the doctor and therapist
 - ◆ Psychotic features or tendencies, history of psychotic episode, on anti-psychotic medications
 - ◆ History of psychiatric hospitalizations
 - ◆ Dissociative Identity Disorder (MPD) unless stable, well integrated, solid therapeutic alliance with therapist who will be present during ***Taking It Lightly*** weekend; should have meds on hand during weekend
 - ◆ Self-mutilating
 - ◆ Suicidal
 - ◆ Conduct disorder/oppositional defiant disorder
 - ◆ Closed head injury, serious neurological deficits

“Thank you for Taking It Lightly with me. Accepting full responsibility for the results of my life and learning to express my emotions openly and freely has made a remarkable shift in my relationships with friends and clients.”

Patrick Hart, Chiropractor

- ◆ Mental retardation or of low intelligence
- ◆ Delusional disorder

What if there is evidence of dissociative disorders or borderline tendencies? Are these types ever suitable for a weekend?

- The Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory is particularly good for diagnosing the above. Let us know what psychological testing has been done.
- We have had clients with DID (MPD) and BPD in the weekend, only with the therapist on staff during the weekend and with their prescribed medications on hand. There have been times students have had to be led to a separate, quiet room to rest, be safe, finish processing privately, and switch back to their adult ego. Only high-functioning DID clients with good executive control and who are well able to self-nurture and do inner dialogue with parts are appropriate for *Taking It Lightly*.
- We would exclude any:
 - ◆ newly diagnosed DID clients
 - ◆ cult survivors (with poor ego strength)
 - ◆ people who are actively suicidal
 - ◆ self-mutilating clients
 - ◆ person still living with perpetrators
 - ◆ person suspected of having lethal programming in place

*We hope that this information has provided answers for your questions regarding **Taking It Lightly** and referring your clients to the weekend. If you have any other questions, please feel free to call us and we will do our best to respond to your concerns.*

Acknowledgements for the *Taking It Lightly* Weekend

All acknowledgements throughout this booklet are used with the specific permission of those quoted.

- There is no adequate way to express my gratitude for the gifts I received. Past abuse experiences haunted me and contributed greatly to the chaos in my life. Through the tools I acquired and the newfound source of safe and loving support I gained at the Center, I have moved from surviving into thriving.

Sandy F

- Thank you - you saved my life! I truly believe that if it weren't for recovery and the Center, I wouldn't be alive today. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for a new life, a second chance to live and enjoy life.

Ann D

- The weekend was one of the memorable experiences in my life, ranking right up there with the birth of my children. I was heard, understood and loved. For the first time I realized that what happened to me wasn't my fault. Thank you!

Michael B

- The weekend was life changing for me. I shifted a belief that I'd had since being a very small child and am now living with a new empowering belief. The results for me have been immeasurable. I now, at 48 years old, am believing in me. I acknowledge the instructors and staff for creating a level of safety that allows this type of work to be done.

Diane S

- It was the first time I could name experientially the emotion of shame within my whole being. The weekend came at a time when I was finally ready to deal with the emotions surrounding the issue of sexual abuse.

MFW

- I acknowledge the weekend for the tremendous way it creates an environment for individuals to feel safe for a while, long enough to allow them to begin healing and growing out of their existing trap. Finding the words to share all the gratitude and value of this experience is difficult to do since the acknowledgments are far too great, at many levels, to put into words.

Wendy P

- All the work and support that was bringing me to know myself at a better level... I was scared in the beginning. I am now aware and happy with myself. I want to thank everybody for their support of me!

Sandy S

- I acknowledge Taking It Lightly for helping me choose to open a door that allowed me to move from a prison of fear, pain and anger to a boundless life of joy, peace and inner power.

Joyce P

- This weekend increased my awareness of self-insights and my ability to assess situations in my life honestly. As a result, I am experiencing increased intimacy with my husband and daughter, as well as with myself!

Judy S

- I was amazed at the ratio of staff to students. The result was a safe, supportive and loving environment. I learned how to hug, to use language in a healthy way and how to slow down and take care of myself. That's a lot for just one weekend.

Marcia

Patricia Clason is the developer of the *Taking it Lightly* programs, as well as founder and Executive Director of the Center for Creative Learning. She has been writing, teaching, training, consulting and speaking for over 30 years. Patricia has integrated and synthesized the best of her experiences and wisdom with alternative methods and advanced technology to create some of the finest programs available. Her work reflects her personal integrity and commitment to practicing what she teaches.



Over 250 *Taking It Lightly* graduates have been trained in the Center's Professional Excellence Program to be workshop facilitators and many have gone on to advanced training in The Making of a Master Instructor Training Program to teach the weekends at the Center and/or create new programs for emotional healing as well as professional development. They bring extensive expertise and experience from their lives and careers to the programs that they teach for the Center and other organizations.

The Starfish Foundation is a non-profit [501(c)(3)] organization which can receive tax-deductible donations, assisting emotional trauma survivors in their emotional healing by providing programs and funding for emotional healing, thereby helping survivors to liberate their grief, rage and shame, and allow joy to return to their lives.

**For *Taking It Lightly* registration paperwork,
course dates or more information, please contact:**

Taking It Lightly 414-374-5433

800-236-4692 (outside Greater Milwaukee)

Registration paperwork and dates, as well as more information on other programs, are also available online at www.lightly.com/lightly.html or via e-mail at takingit@lightly.com.

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