Tequesta, May 1, 2013: As an active alcoholic; Janice was a master of secrecy. “I used to hide vodka in small cough syrup bottles, soda bottles, hair gel…you name it…and place them strategically throughout the house, in the yard, and in my car.”, Janice explains. “This went on for years and years, until one day we were all out in the yard grilling up some steaks and our dog started digging in the flower bed and, wham, he dug up bottles of booze. My family was in shock”, she says.

*Nearly a third of all alcoholics in the U.S. are women.*

*Sixty percent of U.S. women have at least one drink a year.*

*Among women who drink, 13 percent have more than seven drinks per week.*

Studies have found that women are more likely than men to engage in secretive alcohol abuse. This makes the condition hard to identify and treat. The reasons why women engage in secretive alcohol abuse include the social stigma attached to drinking (how many of us think of a female drunk is more pathetic than a male drunk), a fear of losing control over one’s well-orchestrated life, as well as concerns about losing family if their drinking problem was discovered.

Hidden alcoholism is such a treacherous problem. Women work hard to conceal drinking and become masters at hiding the problem from everyone – even her husband, family and closest friends.

There are a number of ways in which women make an effort to disguise their addiction. As their addiction deepens, they actually become quite adept at hiding techniques, leaving many loved ones blindsided when the issue comes to light.

For the busy, multi-tasking woman, hiding alcohol consumption comes down to a matter of timing. They prepare meals for the family and get their husbands and kids ready for work and school. Then, once everyone is out the door, and they are alone, they are free to start drinking. For women who see their lives as unfulfilling, or feel trapped in their traditional gender roles, this is a chance to escape reality – and pursue a more independent, yet destructive, path.

Some women are unable to schedule their drinking with such tight control. For them, it becomes a never-ending effort to mask the smell of alcohol on their breath and clothes. These women will try to hide the activity by chewing gum, using breath mints or wearing heavy perfume to mask the smell.
Finally, there is the hiding. Recently, the husband of a recovering alcoholic returned home from his wife’s alcohol rehab program and began searching through the house. Although everything appeared normal on the surface, he soon discovered that his wife had been hiding beer, wine and hard alcohol in a number of locations that included, in the ceiling tiles, beneath the house itself, and even between the mattresses of the bed they slept in.

The Shame Spiral

The deeper a woman falls into the cycle of alcoholism, the more shame she feels over her lack of control. “This creates a vicious cycle in addiction”, says Dr. Tim Worden, Executive Director of Futures of Palm Beach, an addiction program in Tequesta, FL. “The more shame she feels, the less likely she will be to reach out for help. This places a huge burden on loved ones, because now they identify the behavior and need to get her some help”, Dr. Worden explains.

Looking for Signs of Hidden Alcoholism

Because women who are suffering from hidden alcoholism are highly unlikely to admit that they have a problem (or seek professional help on their own), it could be a life or death decision for the friends and family members to intervene. These are some of the signs and symptoms of this dangerous disease.

Symptoms of alcoholism in women:

- Change in performance at work or school
- Loss of interest in socializing with others (isolating)
- Drinking at socially unacceptable times throughout the day
- Disappearing without warning for stretches of time
- Chronic illness (hangovers)
- Irritability and moodiness

Addiction treatment professionals look for one or more of the conditions above being exhibited for a period of six months or longer before making the determination that alcohol (or drug) abuse is the primary cause.

Once loved ones have confirmed that there is a legitimate alcohol abuse or addiction problem, the next step is call and help. “I was really, really resisting getting help”, says Janice “but I knew that if I didn’t, I was going to lose everything.”
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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About Futures of Palm Beach: The mission at Futures is to create an integrated, multidisciplinary approach that is extensive and life-changing, working at both the core emotional level to uncover the central issues driving the addiction or eating disorder, and at the practical level, creating coping skills and a detailed life plan that prevent the individual from relapsing back into old patterns.

Programs are tailored to the unique needs of men and women 18 and older struggling to overcome:
- Eating Disorders
- Substance Abuse and Addictions
- Mood disorders
- Trauma/ Anxiety Disorders
- Co-occurring Disorders

Futures of Palm Beach has several major components which are specifically identified in the research as being related to recovery for addictions and eating disorder issues, and that help Futures stand out as a highly developed treatment program.

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If you’d like more information on this topic or to schedule an interview with Tim Worden, PhD please call Heather Muha at 561-935-4166 or email Hmuha@FuturesOfPalmBeach.com