



The Counseling Center News

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WELCOME

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Welcome to the first issue of our quarterly newsletter. It is our hope that this newsletter, in conjunction with our website will extend our services to clients and health care professionals in the community. We want to acquaint you with the Counseling Center by offering helpful information from our years of experience in our areas of expertise.

Each issue will feature an article called "Tools of the Trade" where a specific type of therapy will be presented by outlining the theory, practice and benefits the model offers. "Yoga and Mindfulness" will demonstrate the benefits of a body-centered practice. "Family Matters" will offer support and ideas for meeting the many challenges faced by families today. Future issues of the newsletter will bring articles on EMDR for healing trauma, Therapy with Children, Healthy Emotional Habits, Parenting Children through Divorce, and The Internet. The Counseling Center is a small group practice based in the heart of Towson. We have been serving the community for over fifteen years.

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Yoga and Mindfulness

By Gayle Bohlman

Yoga is not just a method of exercise, it is a philosophy for healthy living on the pursuit of a spiritual path. There are actually eight aspects to the study of yoga. These include: breath work, movement and postures, values for living, behavioral disciplines for living, mindfulness, concentration training, meditation, and spiritual communion.

Yoga has many benefits for the nervous system. Participants quickly notice the soothing and energizing benefits of their practice, and research also indicates many health benefits. Our busy culture bombards the nervous system with stimulation. When the nervous system is over active it can fail to soothe and restore itself.

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"When the nervous system is over active it can fail to soothe and restore itself"

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

By Jim Gach

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) have in common the notion that many mental health problems stem from irrational ways of thinking. These irrational ways of thinking are pervasive for human beings and appear cross culturally. This article will begin to explore some of the concepts of CBT.

“A rational response is one that is considered to contribute to our longevity and/or long term happiness.”

A primary concept in CBT is the basic understanding that what happens to us does not directly cause us to have feelings. The emotional response is caused by what we tell ourselves about the event rather than the event itself. If the event caused the emotional response then **everyone** would have to have the same emotional response to an event.

For example, a man brings home flowers for his wife or girlfriend. Usually, the woman would have happy feelings. Thus we tend to conclude that bringing a woman flowers causes happy feelings. Not so. Let’s say that the man has a history of running around with other women and routinely brings flowers home when he has done so to assuage his guilt. Now when the woman sees him coming up the walk with flowers I doubt that she will be happy. So, it is how we interpret the event that determines how we will feel.

In CBT this is referred to as the ABCs of emotions. The (A) is the activating event, the (B) represents the beliefs we have about things and what we will tell ourselves about the (A), and the (C) are the behavioral consequences, what we do as a result of what we tell ourselves at (B). In the example above the man bringing flowers is the (A), the woman’s interpretation is the (B). Let’s look at some possible self-statements she could make at (B).

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There are six therapists on our staff providing a wide range of clinical expertise for children, adults, couples and families.

We invite you to respond with feedback, questions, and requests in the section called TCC Dialogue.

To receive this free newsletter by e-mail sign on through our webpage www.TCCTowson.com

MEDIATION - An Alternative for Families in Divorce

By Terry McGeehan

What is Mediation?

Family mediation is a respectful and effective process for couples seeking to minimize the emotional and financial trauma of separation and divorce. It is respectful in that each person is given the opportunity to express his or her concerns, needs and hopes for the future. Its effectiveness lies in the high rates of satisfaction and compliance. Agreements are reached through mutual understanding and collaborative problem solving. The goal is to find the win/win solutions which best serve the integrity of each family member. Couples work together to create co-parenting plans and financial structures unique to their situation. The collaborative mentality minimizes conflict, which is better for everyone involved, especially children. Couples are supported by the idea that while the marriage is ending, the family and the role of parenting continues. Mediation allows the couple to make their own decisions in a confidential and private setting without the threat of court imposed decisions.

How does Mediation Work?

With the guidance of a trained neutral person, the mediator, the participants talk directly to each other rather than through attorneys. The role of the mediator is to provide a supportive and confidential environment in which each person is given the opportunity to voice his or her concerns and ideas. The mediator does not make decisions for the couple but can offer suggestions. The participants make their own decisions with the goal of finding solutions which best fit the needs and integrity of the family. The three key issues addressed in separation and divorce are 1) a parenting plan for the children 2) division of property 3) a financial agreement that best supports each family member. Once the participants create a plan, the mediator writes "a memorandum of agreement". This document is taken to the couple's individual attorneys for review. After the agreement has been approved by counsel it can be written as a legal document and signed. This document can be used as the basis for an uncontested divorce decree from the courts.

Yoga from page 1

Yoga practice offers soothing and restoring to the nervous system in many ways. By occupying the mind with attention to breath and movement in the present moment the mind is relieved of other preoccupations. Breath work brings soothing, slowing and relaxing to a nervous system which is over stimulated. The focus on the posture and movement in yoga invites the mind to a singular focus in the moment, distracting the mind from the multi tasking which tires the nervous system.

In future issues we will explore further the benefits yoga may offer for improved physical, mental and spiritual health.

"Breath work brings soothing, slowing and relaxing to a nervous system which is over stimulated."

Cognitive Therapy from page 2

1. "How sweet, he's bringing me flowers, he must really love me."
2. "That SOB has been running around again. I'm going to kill him when he gets in here."
3. "He's been out with someone else. What's wrong with me? I must not be good enough."
4. "Oh no, what if he finds someone better and leaves me. How will I survive? I'll grow old lonely and die alone."

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You can readily see that each of those segments will lead to very different feelings: happy, angry, depressed and anxious. Now to make it a little more complex, let's say that the philandering husband says to himself, "What a jerk I've been. I only bring flowers when I've been running around. I'm going to bring her flowers because I really love her." So here he comes up the walk feeling happy about his good deed. Only, the woman is saying #2 above to herself and so he is in for a big surprise!

CBT and REBT are concerned with the validity of what we tell ourselves at (B). If we are making rational statements then we will have a rational response. A rational response is considered to be one that contributes to our longevity and/or long-term happiness. It is therefore very rational to have feelings of anger, depression or anxiety. The problem is that human beings tend to have too much anger, anxiety or depression. At lower levels it tends to help us stand up for ourselves, be protective, plan for the future or have appropriate feelings of disappointment or grief. At higher levels, we tend to blow up and yell or hit others, becoming paralyzed with anxiety or stuck in overwhelming depression.

Thus in the example above, when the woman sees him coming up the walk with flowers in hand, a rational response at (B) might be: "Hmm, here he comes with flowers. That's not usually good news. Let me get some information from him to find out what's up."

In CBT we explore how to lower the level of response so that we will have an appropriate level of emotion. Again, we are not trying to eliminate emotions - that would be irrational. Instead we are trying to modulate emotions. In the next newsletter we will discuss some of the key ways of doing that.