

A BI-MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER
BROUGHT TO YOU
BY
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PSYCHCARE

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Mindful Wellness

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A belated Happy New Year to our subscribers! Even us therapists are subject to procrastination and challenges with prioritizing! I thought I would put together my thoughts about psychology in these challenging financial times (see below). Other contributions to this newsletter include a piece on a specialized form of couples counseling called Imago Relational Therapy, as well as a focus on educational/academic skill building. As always, if you are interested in a particular topic, feel free to contact us and we'll do our best to accommodate.

Best Wishes,

Seth Grobman, Psy.D.

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Economic Stress Disorder: A New Diagnosis?

Seth Grobman, Psy.D.

While the title of this article is tongue in cheek, the serious reality is that few of us have seen the likes of this economic climate in our lifetime and we are understandably feeling a variety of emotions we might never have felt before. People often approach me and ask if people are seeking therapy to deal with their economic "woes." I respond by saying that no one comes to therapy because of the economic downturn, but whatever brings them in, the economy is making matters more intense and frightening. In my practice I see the impact in a variety of ways: people are in literal disbelief that their cushion of retirement savings has evaporated, others saw it coming, but cannot digest the idea that they would lose their secure job and source of income, some find themselves in debt far deeper than they had expected due the loss of equity in their home.

Regardless of how the economy effects people with whom I work, the fact is that it impacts everyone. And depending upon one's presenting problem, economic woes have a way of intensifying symptoms. Be it depression, anxiety, alcohol or substance abuse, these difficulties are exacerbated by the economy. For the first time, I find that many clients are needing assistance with "perspective taking," or how to incorporate dealing with their economic stress within the context of their presenting problems. Inwardly, I pray that my role will not morph into a "psychofinancial" consultant! However, the fact of the matter is that money and finances are deeply connected with one's psychology. One's relationship with money can be as unique as one's thumbprint. What does money represent to you: prestige, security, competitiveness, shame, envy, power? The possibilities are endless. Likewise, financial distress can symbolize a host of issues, again, depending upon the individual. Most often

Economic Stress

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Those who encounter unfamiliar financial distress are disoriented; thrown into a netherworld and feel ill-equipped to deal. Shame and humiliation are all-too-familiar feelings and invariably lead to secrecy. The struggling person often feels like he or she has an embarrassing secret and cannot bear to share this with his world.

Others may utilize a more defensive posture that can cause problems to mount. Denying the problem and choosing to avoid the conflict presents difficulties of their own. Procrastination is familiar to us all, however, in this case, the impact can be severe. Becoming self-righteous is yet another defensive position. Declaring oneself a victim of societal circumstances can also cause one to dismiss their own accountability for their situation.

It is essential that one take care of him or herself in these most treacherous of times. Being honest with oneself and one's support network is crucial. Taking a thorough inventory of one's lifestyle and examining areas for change can be empowering and clarifying. Seeking professional help for emotional difficulties associated with feeling "economically traumatized" is a step toward self-empowerment. While no one can provide a person with the "answers," professional help can be a significant step towards taking control over one's emotional and financial matters.

An Intro to Imago Relational Therapy:

Linda King, L.M.H.C.

Imago: Transform Your Relationship

Everyone wants a wonderful and loving relationship. Yet few of us can say we are living the "perfect" life happily ever after. What happens between those first romantic moments and now when we see our mate as only "OK" or even the enemy?

The Romantic Stage

All relationships start out in the "romantic stage". It is a time when the world feels a little lighter, problems seem a little smaller and you have the feeling that you have finally found your "soul mate", your "happily ever after". Couples in the romantic stage love to be together, talking, touching, and feeling safe and connected. The Romantic Stage makes you feel that only the two of you exist. It's a wonderful time that is crucial to becoming connected. This feeling of safeness and connection in the Romantic Stage is something we want to keep forever.

The Power Struggle

Often relationships move from the Romantic Phase into the "Power Struggle." The Power Struggle is not filled with feelings of love, safety and romance. The Power Struggle is a battle. Some couples battle quietly, withdrawing and ignoring their partner. Some couples have open warfare with blaming, shaming and sarcasm (or worse). During the Power Struggle

we feel unsafe, unloved and disconnected from our mate. We are left wondering what went wrong, what's changed, where did our "soul mate" go? Often one feels they are the same but their partner has changed. It is important to realize that the Power Struggle is a very normal stage of a relationship and a very important one. During this stage if conflict and stresses are handled well, a relationship will grow into a deeper and more mature love. Alternatively, mishandled conflict can lead to ruptures in a relationship, leading to tension, parallel marriages and exits like affairs and addictions.

Conflict is Opportunity

The conflict and tension of the Power Struggle allows us to deal with issues in the present tense that we have brought from the past. It allows us to grow up and become the partner we want to be, more loving, more compassionate and available to our partner. Frustrations and conflicts have long tentacles that reach into the recesses of our untold stories and unlock the past, which make some of us more reactive in relationships and less thoughtful with our partner. Couples can change the way they handle frustration and conflict by transforming the way they communicate. Safe and compassionate communication transforms a relationships frustrations and conflicts into a gateway to growth.

Five Strategies for Academic Success

Ellen Horowitz, M.S.

1. Evaluate your study environment.

Developing strong study habits is not an easy task, so a great place to start is creating an effective place to study. As it is not possible for every student to have their own office to work in, creating a study area can be as simple as having a table to work on and a comfortable chair to sit in. This space should be properly lit and free of noise and visual distractions. Loud noises including voices, phones, television, and lyrical music can pull the student's attention from the task, so a quiet room is best. To avoid visual distractions, choose a place that your child normally does not play as this can pull their attention off of work to their toys. If this is not possible, create a study divider by cutting a cardboard presentation board in half, this creates privacy for the child on three sides of the work area. Having all your supplies at hand is crucial to eliminating procrastination. If you do not have a desk with drawer space, then a file box with a tray on top is a perfect alternative. This box can hold paper, pencils, crayons, scissors, a ruler, a calculator, tape, and any other materials your child may need to be successful in completing his/her homework. By giving the student an organized designated work space, you are setting them up for academic success.

2. Take notes in class with ease.

Imagine being in History class and your teacher is giving notes on material that will be on the end of the week test. Next to you, a student is texting their friends, another student is tapping a pencil, two girls in the back of the room are talking. Taking notes during a lecture involves multiple learning processes. Students need to be able to listen, read, write, and tune out distractions all at once. This can be quite difficult for any student, but for those who have attention issues or for those who are perfectionists, this scenario can be quite frustrating. There are many strategies to help students become effective note-takers such as:

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Five Strategies for Academic Success

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- *Listening for signal words* – when teachers want to emphasize an idea they will use signal words such as: this happened in several ways..., make sure you know..., and be sure to remember....
- *Utilizing abbreviations and symbols in place of words*
- *Utilizing a 2 or 3 column note-taking formats* – when taking notes there are many formats available to assist the student with capturing the most important information such as vocabulary, dates, important people and questions that may arise during the lecture or during the review of the notes. These formats help the student to organize and review material for future use.

Utilize *graphic organizers* to show relationships such as cause/effect, compare/contrast, and main idea/detail.

Taking the notes is important but what you do after the notes are taken is vital to academic success. Transcribing, or rewriting your notes within 24 hours of taking them is an effective study strategy that helps the student solidify what was learned during the lesson. During the transcription process, the student rereads the notes and turns the abbreviations and symbols into their word form and writes bulleted information into complete sentences. As the student reads these new notes, they should jot down any questions that they come up with to ask their teachers the next day and consult a dictionary or glossary for any words they do not know. The student should review the notes again the next day before class to remind themselves of any questions they need answered. By the next class period, the student would have been exposed to the content in their notes three times making them better able to remember the lesson.

3. Manage your time.

Today's kids are often overscheduled. Many of them have afterschool activities such as: sports, part-time jobs, religious school, and music or art lessons. Some children are placed in afterschool care until their parents finish work. This makes completing homework, projects, and studying difficult to fit into the child's schedule. With some creative scheduling strategies, students can fit everything in while also having time for friends, family obligations, and down time. Many schools give students planners or agendas to help them keep track of homework and school related activities. Just like their parents may utilize Microsoft Outlook or other calendar programs, these planners can be extended to help students keep track of their extracurricular activities as well as appointments, managing materials, and setting goals. An example of this is if your child frequently leaves books or papers at home, a simple Check Mark System can help.

When your child is packing up, have him place a check next to the assignment in his planner when he places the correct materials in his backpack. This simple method encourages your child to be accountable for his own materials and saves you a lot of time and tears when work is forgotten. One strategy for effective time management is to create a TO-DO List. This helps students identify and prioritize their activities so that they can use the little time they have more effectively. A basic TO-DO list should not only include the task, but what they expect to gain from accomplishing the task, and when they would like to have the task completed. The student needs to look at the intrinsic (internal) and extrinsic (external) motivations or rewards associated with accomplishing the task. As a student decides the priority of the activity they learn to measure and evaluate its importance. When the

student can cross something off their TO-DO list, there is a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction. As students begin to manage their time more effectively, they will find they have more time than they thought.

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Imago Relational Therapy

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The Intentional Dialogue

The Intentional Dialog is a communication method that will reduce reactivity and increase thoughtfulness and empathy in a relationship. It is composed of three steps: mirroring, validating and empathy. These three steps allow you to understand your partner's perspective allowing you to "walk in your partners shoes". The dialog reestablishes safety within the relationship if it has been lost. As your reactivity decreases, your desire to connect with your partner increases allowing you to once again "come out and play with your partner." In this connection mature love will develop. The Intentional Dialog will give you the safety to know and grow with your mate.

Girls Who Think They're Fat, More Suicidal

United Press International 2009-03-16

Body dissatisfaction -- independent of actual overweight status -- has an impact on suicidal behavior in U.S. girls, researchers said.

The researchers found the perception of being overweight among girls raised the probability of suicidal thoughts by 5.6 percent, the probability of a suicide attempts by 3.2 percent and the probability of injury causing suicide attempts by 0.6 percent. "The prevalence of body dissatisfaction, among special populations of youths such as non-black girls, is significantly higher than the general youth population, even when the underlying weight is in a healthy range," study co-author Inas Rashad of Georgia State University in Atlanta said in a statement.

"Interventions that identify and assist these youths and educate them regarding a healthy body image will succeed in lowering suicide attempts."

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Psychology In The News:

Seven Steps Advised for Obese Children

United Press International 2009-03-06

A team of U.S. physicians and psychologists proposes a new model of care for treating childhood and teen obesity involving seven steps.

The Seven Steps to Success for overweight children and adolescents, described in Obesity Management, defines a stepwise intervention strategy of increasing intensity: medical management; education; environmental changes; support groups; cognitive-behavior therapy I: clinical or short-term immersion; cognitive-behavior

therapy II: long-term immersion; and perhaps bariatric surgery.

"Essential to the success of this treatment model is the commitment and participation of family members, and especially parents, who should not only be strongly supportive of the child's efforts, but also take an active role in the nutritional, exercise, and lifestyle modifications being introduced," the experts said in a statement.

Although it may not be necessary for each individual to complete all of the steps to achieve successful weight loss, families should pursue the stepwise strategy aggressively until they succeed, Daniel Kirshenbaum of Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago said in a statement.

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4. Ready, Set, Go: Attitude, Intention, Goal

When a student enters into learning with a positive can-do attitude they are more likely to set a focused intention and reach the goals they set for themselves. According to the Encarta Dictionary, *intention* means to have an aim or objective and a quality of purposefulness. By teaching your child to set an intention, or a goal, you are giving them a target to shoot for. When a child has the goal or end product in mind, it is easier to begin and accomplish the task. When faced with a long-term project or an exam covering a lot of material, it is helpful to break the task into smaller units or attainable mini-goals. Scheduling shorter study periods over more days gives the student the time to think about the information, develop questions, and find answers to their questions. Research has shown that in order for something to become a habit it needs to be repeated in the same way for 21 days. This continuous exposure to the activity creates a pattern of behavior or attitude that becomes typical and commonplace. The more exposure an individual has to information the better understanding they will have for it. This is why studying 10 minutes a day for a 10 days is more effective than studying the same material for two hours the day before the test. By success is right around the corner.

5. Utilizing memory techniques for effective studying.

Have you ever tried to give directions to someone and you can't remember the names of the streets but you can remember the stores on the corners or the number of street lights in between each turn? The reason you can remember the stores is you made connections between the landmarks and the where you are traveling to. This strategy is a great one for helping students study for tests, remember information they have read, or even remember steps in a process. There are many different association strategies like visualization, categorization, repetition, rhyme, acronyms, mnemonics, and abbreviations.

Although many teachers may instruct the whole class the same way, each student learns in a way unique to their own Learning Style. Some students are auditory learners, where they can remember whatever they hear. These students are usually very talented at remembering the words to songs. Some are visual learners, remembering anything they see, typically these students are doodlers, and they can benefit from turning their notes into pictures to remember them. Others are kinesthetic learners; these students learn by physically doing something, when they can manipulate or act out the process, it becomes theirs. If you learn your child's Learning Style, you can better assist them at studying and mastering information. For more information about Learning Styles, go to <http://www.chaminade.org/inspire/learnstl.htm>.

Ellen Horowitz has a Masters in TESOL from Nova Southeastern University and is a Professional Educator. She taught in the Broward County Public School System for nine years and at Broward Community College for two years. Ellen currently has her own Educational Therapy practice called *LearningSmart*, where she does one-on-one academic therapy and remediation. Here she works with students with learning difficulties to improve academically and socially with the goal of creating independent and confident learners. She utilizes many state of the art technology programs such as: Brainware Safari™ and Play Attention™. She also teaches Study and Success Skills programs to 4th-12th grade students across Broward County. Ellen is also a certified Parent Educator through the International Network for Children and Families and offers the Parenting Course, Redirecting Children's Behavior™. Ellen now has recently joined the team at Weston Psychcare in Weston, Florida. For more information about these programs, contact Ellen at 954-724-4463.

Girls and Weight

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The researchers found the risk of suicide by adolescent females has the potential to add about \$280 million to \$350 million to the costs of adolescent obesity, including the direct cost of illnesses and premature mortality.

"If being overweight not only imposes the usual health-care and labor market costs, but also increases the risk of suicide, we need to take these costs into account when offering solutions," Rashad said.

The study, based on 1999-2007 data from the Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance System, is scheduled to be published in *Social Science and Medicine*.

What is Occupational Therapy Pediatric Rehabilitation?

Occupational Therapy pediatric rehabilitation is a therapeutic program designed to evaluate, treat and manage a variety of neuromuscular, skeletal or cognitive limitations in infants, children and adolescents. Our therapist specializes in the evaluation and treatment of infants, children and adolescents who are experiencing difficulties with performance of daily activities in the areas of feeding/eating, self-care, play, learning and development due to a variety of congenital or acquired disorders.

What conditions can benefit from Occupational Therapy Pediatric Rehabilitation?

Occupational Therapy Pediatric Therapists treat a wide range of disorders in infants, children and adolescents. Some common diagnoses seen are:

- Cerebral Palsy
- Orthopedic injury or problems
- Neurological disorders (congenital or post traumatic)
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Failure to thrive
- Prematurity
- Sensory Integration Disorders
- Autism
- Genetic/Metabolic Disorders
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Spina Bifida
- Developmental Delay
- Feeding/eating disorders
- Perceptual/motor limitations

Your Occupational Therapist will perform comprehensive developmental, musculoskeletal, neurological or oral motor evaluations to identify areas of difficulties and establish a baseline status. Working closely with family members, educators and other health-care providers, your therapist will design a treatment program directed toward meeting specific and attainable goals intended to improve functional performance. Some examples of evaluations and treatments provided by our therapist include:

- Neonatal and infant development
- Feeding and dysphagia
- Gross and fine motor development
- Sensory integration and modulation
- Activities of daily living
- Orthotics
- Prosthetics
- Cognitive development

Please contact us if you think your child might benefit from occupational therapy.