

Connections

The Newsletter of the Connections Program

A Partnership between the Health District of Northern Larimer County and Touchstone Health Partners

Part Two: Treating Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Submitted by: Amy Indermuehle, PsyD

In a previous article, I described the diagnosis of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Once diagnosed, treatment can begin. The two front-line treatments for OCD are medications, specifically serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SRI/SSRI), and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT is the preferred treatment for children unless symptoms are severe or a trained therapist is not available. About 70% of people seeking treatment get better with CBT, medication, or a combination. No current SRI/SSRI is superior to the others for treatment of OCD. However, higher doses may be needed for OCD than are typically used for depression. Sometimes SRI/SSRI therapy may be augmented with additional medications.

Effective CBT targets obsessions and compulsions as well as accompanying cognitive distortions. Obsessions are treated with exposure-based strategies. Imaginal exposure involves intentionally thinking about anxiety-provoking stimuli. It can be as simple as agreeing with obsessions or as complex as writing a story about the feared consequences coming true. *In vivo* means facing fears in real life. All exposures are designed to generate anxiety and then habituate or get used to it. Combining imaginal and *in vivo* exposures is particularly effective.

Since compulsions are efforts to reduce anxiety, and the goal of exposure is to generate anxiety, compulsions must be eliminated. This is called response prevention -- making a choice to not do compulsive behavior no matter how anxious one becomes. Compulsions may also be altered (e.g., done faster or "wrong") or canceled out by subsequent actions. For example, after washing hands in a compulsive way, one touches trash to "recontaminate." This step often is very challenging for people with OCD.

Cognitive distortions are inaccurate or inflexible thinking patterns that drive negative emotions and ineffective behaviors. Some experts address cognitive distortions only peripherally to the main work of exposure and response prevention (ERP). Other experts address them after a period of ERP in order to help clients develop more realistic beliefs about the

probability of the feared consequences. Strategic cognitive work, developed by Reid Wilson, PhD (www.anxieties.com), challenges two core distortions early and often in treatment: "I must be 100% certain that X will/did not happen" and "I must get rid of this anxiety right now." Clients learn to talk back to OCD, saying things like, "I'm willing to be uncertain and anxious right now. I can handle this. I am pushing forward anyway." It is important to note that relaxation techniques run counter to this process and are not included in effective CBT for OCD. Mindfulness-based techniques that focus on remaining in the present moment, even when anxious and unsure, can be helpful as long as they are not trying to achieve relaxation.

Let's put it all together using the example of hit-and-run accidents. Here's an imaginal exposure script: "I feel a big bump on the drive home. I drive straight home and go in the house without checking under the car. Maybe I hit that guy at the cross walk. He might be dying. It's all my fault." A recording of the script may be played while doing *in vivo* exposures of driving routes with high pedestrian traffic. Response prevention includes not going back over the route mentally or physically, not checking the car for



damage or newspapers for stories of hit-and-runs, and not seeking reassurance. Accompanying each step is strategic cognitive work. "I'm willing to be uncertain right now. I can handle this anxiety. I want to be able to drive my kids to school." As individuals go through this process repeatedly across a variety of situations, they begin to break free from OCD.

This has been a brief summary of the effective treatments for OCD. A trained therapist can help clients design an effective treatment plan, help them find the courage to carry it out, and help sort out complex challenges which may arise during treatment. For more information, readers can visit the International OCD Foundation on-line at www.iocdf.org.

Dr. Amy Indermuehle is a private practice clinician in Fort Collins specializing in Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. If you have any questions regarding this article, please contact her at drindermuehle@yahoo.com or by calling (970) 222-0524.

We encourage you to submit short articles (50-500 words) on therapeutic approaches, mental health topics, case studies, or therapeutic book/movie reviews, etc., & will publish them as space allows. We reserve the right to edit all submissions.

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Kristen Cochran-Ward, Mental Health Services Program Manager, Health District of Northern Larimer County
kcochran@healthdistrict.org

Kathy Forrest, Assistant Chief Operations Officer, Touchstone Health Partners
kathy.forrest@touchstonehealthpartners.org

Mental Health Specialists:

Yesim Saldivia
ysaldivia@healthdistrict.org

Stefan Price
sprice@healthdistrict.org

Michelle Clark
mclark@healthdistrict.org

Elizabeth Sutphin
esutphin@healthdistrict.org

Megan Winick
Client Advocate
mwinick@healthdistrict.org

Admin. Phone: 970-494-4370
Fax: 970-494-4303
Direct Services: 970-221-5551

Web: www.mentalhealthconnections.org

To view Connections Newsletter and the Professional Bulletin Board online:
<http://connections.healthdistrict.org>

Connections is published 6 times/year. The purpose of *Connections* is to offer information on current therapy groups and services in the community; provide updates on services available through the Connections Program; and offer a place where information on community happenings of interest to mental health and human services providers can be shared.

Submissions are welcome. E-mail them to Emily Leetham at eleetham@healthdistrict.org by the following deadlines:

NEXT EDITION: July/Aug 2015
Article Deadline: June 15, 2015

Submissions printed in *Connections* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Connections Program. Our editorial staff do not check the credentials of individuals wishing to submit groups or other listings. If you have concerns regarding credentials or other issues, please contact the group leader or author of the article directly. Thank you.

Meet Connections' New Program Manager: Kristen Cochran-Ward, LCSW



Kristen Cochran-Ward received her Masters of Science in Social Work from the University of Texas, Arlington and is a licensed clinical social worker. She moved to Colorado in 2002 and spent the past 13 years working in a variety of roles at University of Colorado Health – Mountain Crest. For 10 years Kristen was the Manager of Counseling Services and helped to develop and manage the Crisis Assessment Center (CAC) at Poudre Valley Hospital, the Mobile Assessment Team (MAT), and most recently the adult and adolescent behavioral health intensive outpatient programs at Mountain Crest. In addition to her work at the Health District, Kristen is part of the Beyond the Mirror Counseling Center team and maintains a small private practice there. In her free time, Kristen enjoys spending time with her family, playing golf, and is currently training for the Courage Classis bike ride for Children's Hospital this July.

Kristen will be working to re-envision, improve and expand Connections' services and to add new services to assist families with children or adolescents with potential mental health and/or substance use issues.

Job Opening: Child & Family Therapists Needed

KIDSTUFF Child & Family Counseling is hiring skilled therapists for part-time or full-time contract positions. We are a privately owned group practice of mental health professionals. We primarily work with children, adolescents and parents of low income families, foster families and group homes.

We are looking for clinicians who may specialize in one or many of the following areas: PTSD, EMDR, Substance Abuse, AD/HD, Play Therapy, Art Therapy or other creative therapies, Family Therapy, Social work, Juvenile Justice, or Social Services system. Preference for knowledge or interest in EAP insurance plans & services. Spanish speaking (even partially fluent) is a plus, but not required.

We offer YOU:

- Excellent compensation, merit-based bonuses and incentives for your hard work, experience and competence.
- Flexible hours and caseload. You maintain your own schedule based on your clients' needs and availability. After school, evening and weekend availability is a MUST.
- Variety of work site and locations. We accept referrals from a wide region including Larimer and Weld counties.

Compensation: \$40/ session to start PLUS incentive bonuses based on performance

You must be licensed in Colorado and carry your own malpractice insurance.

For more information, contact Laurie Underwood, LPC at (970)775-7061 or submit your resume and letter of interest to lu@kidstuffcounseling.com.

Resources for the Community

Heart-Centered Counseling

Therapy as a Social Enterprise

Submitted by: Carl Nassar, LPC, NCC, CIP

Therapy can be a hard profession. One challenge we face as professionals is the difficulty of finding referrals for clients we ourselves can't fit in: for reasons of scheduling, insurance, or area of expertise. So I set out to create a counseling practice with that gives therapists a place to go with that hard-to-place referral. I like to think of it as a social enterprise - a therapy practice that has as its guiding principle the ability to serve people no matter what insurance they have, no matter what issue they face, and no matter what age.

With that in mind, I began looking for therapists in the community who were interested in starting something new. So far, 10 of us have come together, and I'm hoping more will one day join me. Together, we make these promises to anyone who calls:

1. Immediate availability: If you call our office, we promise to get you support right away, even on the same day when needed.
2. We'll take your insurance: Between the 10 of us, we're in-network with just about every insurance company, including all the private insurance companies as well as Medicaid and Medicare. We'll make good use of your insurance.
3. We have someone who can help with your specific issue: Again, with 10 of us here, you'll find one of us works with kids, one with adolescents, one with adults and the elderly, others with family, and others with couples. In addition, we have deep experience working with everything from depression and anxiety to dissociative disorders to kids on the autism spectrum.
4. We'll coordinate care with other practitioners in the mental health field as well as with medical doctors. For example, if someone on our team is seeing the couple, and a different therapist in the community is seeing the husband individually, we'll be sure to coordinate with the other therapist.

By taking the social enterprise approach, we've been able to offer a caring, compassionate space where clients can feel safe and can get the help they need, and where therapists feel confident in referring to us, and trusting we will refer back to them.

Heart-Centered Counseling is a new practice model - a social enterprise of sorts - where therapists have come together to share overhead and offer benefits as a group that none could offer individually. Learn more at both www.heartcenteredcounselors.com and www.carlscounseling.com, and feel free to reach out the group by contacting them at help@heartcenteredcounselors.com and 970-498-0709.



Resources for the Professional

Training

Discovering Healing Pathways through Native Wellness

Join spiritual leaders for a two-day experiential workshop incorporating non-western indigenous methods of healing. Participants will learn about the principles of indigenous healing, experience holistic outlook of Native wellness models, and explore implications for practice in a variety of settings.



Facilitators: Lakota Spiritual Leaders: Ricky Gray Grass, Waylon Black Crow, and Elizabeth Warson, PhD, ATR-BC, LPC, NCC (American Indian Art Therapy)

Dates: June 12 & 13, 2015

Location: Northside Aztlan Center
112 Willow Street
Fort Collins, CO 80524

Cost: \$250

Registration can be accessed through www.HealingPathwaysLLC.com.

Please contact Elizabeth Warson at (970) 222-4674 or warsona@gmail.com for additional information.

Supervision

If you are a recent Masters level graduate needing supervision hours for your license, please contact Marcie Mata, LPC, CACII. Cost is \$50/hour.

Please contact Marcie Mata at 970-308-4474 if you are interested. To learn more about Marci, you can view her website at www.marciemata.com.

Office Space Available

Licensed Professional Counselor looking to share office space with another therapist. Part time hours are available up to 15 hours a week. Access to printer, conference room, waiting room, and ample parking. Office located in the southwest part of town. \$10 per hour or negotiated rate if use of space is more frequent.

Please contact Marcie Mata at 970-308-4474 if you are interested.



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mental health & substance abuse resources

525 W. Oak Street
Fort Collins, Colorado 80521

If you wish to be removed from the *Connections* mailing list, your address is wrong, or you would like to receive the publication via email, contact Emily Leetham at eleetham@healthdistrict.org or call 970-494-4370.