

Unity Family Services

Newsletter

July 2017

Raising the bar in mental health services™

Issue 1

Unity Family Services, Inc. is a Pennsylvania licensed mental health provider. We participate in the federally mandated health-care program, Health Choices, which allows consumers the freedom to choose their own health-care provider because we believe that having a choice, matters!

We have been providing community-based mental health services to adults, children, adolescents and families in Armstrong, Butler, Indiana and Westmoreland Counties since 2000 when our Executive Director, Michelle S. Gould MSW, LCSW, founded Unity Family Services, Inc.

We offer a wide range of mental health programs to ensure that we meet our clients' needs. Our services include:

- In-Home Family-Based Therapy
- Outpatient Services
- Peer Support Services

Our Mission at Unity Family Services, Inc. is to provide outstanding advocacy, mental health care, and support to the adults, children and families that we serve in Western Pennsylvania.



What's Inside

Child Abuse.....	1
PTSD.....	2
Blended Families.....	2
Hoarding.....	3
Borderline Personality.....	3
Oppositional Defiant Disorder.....	4

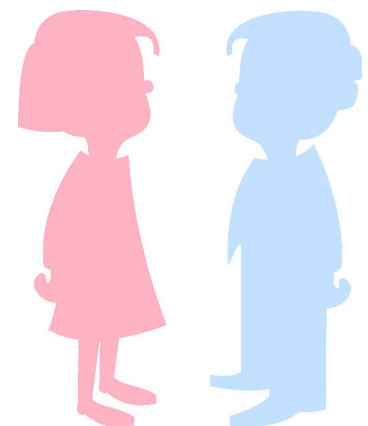
Child Abuse and What You Can Do To Help

Child abuse is a serious epidemic in our country. According to the National Children's Alliance, 679, 000 children were the victims of child abuse or neglect and approximately 1, 520 children died in 2013 from abuse and neglect in the United States. Two components of child abuse are a child and an act or failure to act. It occurs when an individual who does something to cause harm or endanger a child either intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly.

Child abuse and neglect can affect each child differently. However, common possible effects include anxiety, depression, difficulty

concentrating, flashbacks, academic problems, withdrawing from others, and difficulty sleeping. The effects of child abuse can also lead into adulthood and create patterns of violence in families.

The responsibility to prevent and stop child abuse falls on adults in the community. If you suspect a child is being abused, you can report this anonymously to the Child Line Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-932-0313. If you or someone you know needs support to prevent child abuse, you can contact your county children and youth services office for resources.



PTSD - Did You Know?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD is defined as a, "mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event — either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event." PTSD is one of the most common mental health diagnoses because it roughly affects more than 13 million people in the United States alone. Here are 5 facts that you may not have known about you or a loved one who has been diagnosed with PTSD:



1. An estimated 1 out of 10 women will get PTSD at some time in their lives. Women are about twice as likely as men to develop PTSD.

2. People with PTSD may have low self-esteem or relationship problems, or may seem disconnected from their lives.

3. PTSD also causes physical symptoms such as pain, exhaustion, stomach pains, breathing issues, headaches, muscle cramps or aches, or cardiovascular problems.

4. An estimated 70 percent of adults in the United States have experienced a traumatic event at least once in their lives.

5. PTSD symptoms in most cases develop within the first three months after trauma, but they may not surface until months or years have passed.

PTSD looks differently on everyone, and if you believe someone you know or love maybe suffering from this diagnosis encourage them to talk freely in a no judgment zone or suggest that they go and talk to someone privately. Also understand that the person may be ashamed or embarrassed of their traumatic event and may require a great deal of patience and compassion.

Successful Blended Families

Blended families are classically defined as when a divorced parent remarries and their children now have a new step-parent and possibly step-siblings. Change is difficult for any child when a major event happens but blended families prove to be difficult because the child may feel unsure of their place in this "new family." Here are some tips that can help you child or step child feel more comfortable and have an easier adjustment period:

1. Being civil with ex-spouses shows the child that everyone has their best interest in mind. Keeping the child out of arguments, court battles, and marital discord will alleviate them from having to pick sides between parents and step-parents

2. Be understanding of your child or step child's feelings about the divorce or marriage. Acknowledge the feelings

in a positive way so that they feel comfortable so that they continue to express their feelings in a healthy way in the future. There is no wrong or right way for your child to feel about the situation.



3. Create rules and boundaries from the beginning of the new marriage so that the child does not think they are being treated any differently than before. As a bio-parent make the statement that the rules and boundaries need to be followed whether you are enforcing them or their step-parent is enforcing them, this way there will be less of a power struggle.

No matter how hard you try to make this transition as easy as possible, your child may need to take additional time to get used to the situation. Be calm with you child or step-child, the more love and compassion you show, the safer they will feel with their place within the new blended family.

Hoarding

Hoarding is defined as “persistent difficulty discarding or parting with a possession (e.g. material things, animals) because of a perceived need to save them”. Those who deal with hoarding on an everyday basis experience distress surrounding the thought of getting rid of the items or animals. The impact of hoarding ranges from mild to severe. It is important to note that an individual struggling with hoarding may be in denial about their condition or be completely aware of what is happening. Compulsion is a significant piece in hoarding.



There are many signs to look for if concerned that an individual is suffering from the Hoarding disorder: Persistent inability to part with any possession, attachment to these said possessions, cluttered living spaces, letting food or trash build to unsanitary levels, shame or embarrassment, and limited interactions.

Individuals who have been diagnosed with this mental health disorder tend to believe that the items will be useful or have value in the future. Hoarding also makes the individual feel safer when surrounded by the things or animals that they have saved. Hoarding is a dangerous diagnosis due to the health risks for both the individual and

animals if the item being hoarded are animals. It is important to seek help if these symptoms are seen or suspected.

Facts about Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)

- Affects a large range of the population from 14 to 60 years of age.
- Usually begins during adolescence or early adulthood.
- BPD affects 5.9% of adults at some time in their life.
- BPD affects 50% more people than Alzheimer's disease and almost as many people as schizophrenia and bipolar combined. Individuals with BPD struggle to regulate their emotions and thoughts and engage in impulsive and sometimes reckless behaviors.
- Other disorders that commonly co-occur with BPD are: Depression,

anxiety disorder, eating disorder, substance abuse and other personality disorders.

- BPD cannot be cured, but it can be managed through talk therapy and sometimes medication.
- BPD is frequently missed as well as misdiagnosed which can delay or prevent the recovery process.
- Individuals at risk for BPD are those who struggle with worthlessness, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and other childhood traumas (e.g. loss, neglect, bullying).
- Therapy has been shown to decrease impulsive behavior by 40% in an individual with BPD.



Ways to Manage Oppositional Defiant Disorder in Children

The diagnosis of Oppositional Defiant Disorder is given by mental health professionals to describe a set of behaviors a child is exhibiting that include:



- Often loses temper
- Argues with adults and authority figures
- Refuses to comply with adult requests
- Blames others for mistakes
- Deliberately annoys people
- Is easily annoyed by others
- Is angry, resentful, spiteful, vindictive

Does this sound like your child? Four things you can do as a parent to effectively manage your child with oppositional Defiant Disorder:

1. Respond without anger: It's important to respond to your ODD child without anger. Just acknowledge the behavior, state it as you see it, explain how it will need to change and then remove yourself from all arguments. You really have to pick your battles and decide what's most important to you, and ultimately to your child.
2. Be clear and consistent: The nature of oppositional defiant behavior is to wear parents down so they eventually give in. You need to be strong, clear and consistent in your follow through.
3. Do not take things personally. Do not take your child's behavior personally. When your ODD child acts out, as hard as it might be, stay as neutral and objective as possible. You need to be

clear and concise and not get pulled into a power struggle. The key is to keep practicing calm, consistent parenting and following through.

4. Don't be your child's friend, but be his parent: Remember, being a parent is not a personality contest. There are times when they won't like you and may even shout, "I hate you," or call you names. But if you keep setting limits with your child and follow through by giving consequences and holding them accountable, and ultimately you're doing the best thing for your child.



Family-Based Program

Peer Support Services

Outpatient Services

Serving Armstrong, Butler, Indiana, and Westmoreland Counties

1001 S Leechburg Hill Road
Leechburg, PA 15656

118 Market Street
Kittanning, PA 16201

470 North 4th Street
Indiana, PA 15701

Phone: 724-845-2978
Toll Free: 1-866-771-4488

www.ufsmentalhealth.com