



# Unity Family Services

## Newsletter

Winter 2018

Raising the bar in mental health services™

Issue 3

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.



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## Teen Depression

Depression is a mental health disorder which lasts at least at two weeks or more. Some symptoms include persistent sadness, hostility, and irritability, constant fatigue, feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, and suicidal ideation, and self-injurious behaviors. Teens with depression can also experience a lack of interest in activities they would normally enjoy, poor grades, trouble falling asleep, weight loss or gain, constant aches and pains. Depression can be triggered by a number of situations such as divorce, abuse, trauma, bullying, and issues managing school work.

There are ways to treat depression such as the use of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). CBT can help change and improve negative thinking and distorted thoughts. CBT will teach people to look at situations from a more realistic perspective. The use of medication is also common for people with depression. It can be prescribed through a psychiatrist.

Another common treatment is family therapy. Depression does not just effect the person diagnosed, but the entire family. Family therapy can help everyone learn about the depression and ways they can assist their family member in manage of symptoms.

Family therapy can help with crisis management, and help improve communication between members.



# Grief and Loss

Losing a close relative, spouse, sibling, or something you love can be a tough thing. Many people think that they will never feel happy again or think they should be getting better by a certain time. This experience is called grief, and everyone will experience this at some point in their life. Grief is a natural response by the body and mind when someone or something you love is taken away. There is no correct way to grieve or time that one grieves, each person is different. Some of the affects one may have while grieving is trying to ignore the issue, isolate yourself from others, or feel depressed.

Some of the myths of grief are if you ignore the pain, it will go away. Ignoring the pain could make it worse in the long run, it is important to face the grief and actively deal with it. Another myth is that it is important to be strong or to not show any emotions when dealing with grief. Lonely, sad,

frightened, or even anger are normal feelings that could occur when dealing with grief. The last myth is that there is a time limit on how long the grief will last when in actuality, there is no time limit, everyone is different. (Center for Grief and Healing)



When one feels that the grief is unbearable, it is important to talk to someone about it whether it be a friend or counselor. Talking to a counselor can be very beneficial and comforting when grieving. A counselor can help

with understanding the grieving process and how to grieve by recognizing triggers, helping face the grief in a creative and positive way, and work through any barriers that one may experience.

# Postpartum Depression

Bringing a new baby into a household can be a source of joy for many families but can also trigger fear and anxiety. Women who have just given birth to a child are considered "Postpartum," literally translated from its Latin roots as "after childbirth".

Because of the numerous hormone surges during pregnancy, labor, and the body's readjustment period after the birth of a child, these changes can trigger severe emotional changes in the mother. Postpartum Depression (PPD) or "The Baby Blues" affects more than three million women each year.

Symptoms of PPD include mood swings, crying spells, anxiety, difficulty sleeping and sometimes difficulty bonding with the new baby. Onset of these symptoms can occur as soon as two to three days after delivery, may last for weeks and could develop into

clinical depression if left untreated. Postpartum psychosis is a term that describes a rare mental illness that presents with very severe symptoms after childbirth which can manifest as early as three days after delivery; it affects up 0.1 - 0.2% of births.

Women with postpartum psychosis experience symptoms such as irritability, extreme mood swings, hallucinations, paranoia, confusion, and may require psychiatric hospitalization. This is a serious condition and can pose a threat to the newborn and other children that may be in the home. The best way to recognize PPD and Postpartum Psychosis is to educate pregnant women and their families about the illnesses, their symptoms, and have them lookout for signs that the conditions may be arising. Because of the stigma that still exists with mental

health treatment today, PPD and postpartum psychosis can often go untreated. These illnesses should be treated like any other medical condition which should be monitored by a healthcare professional.



# Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder as defined by The National Alliance on Mental Illness, is a chronic mental illness that can create dramatic shifts in a person's mood, energy, and ability to think clearly. The word Bipolar has recently become popularized by television and social media, though is often portrayed in only severe instances or scenarios. Although bipolar disorder is defined through episodes of both mania and depression, it is important to recognize that the severity of these symptoms vary widely in each individual case. Some people may experience distinct manic or depressed states, while others may experience both extremes simultaneously or in rapid sequence. Severe episodes of mania or depression may also occur and be accompanied by psychotic features, such as hallucinations or delusions. Bipolar disorder can occur in both men and women, children, and teens.

Signs and symptoms of bipolar disorder may vary widely in their

pattern, severity, and frequency as this disease can look very different in different people. Signs and symptoms of mania could include: Feeling unusually "high" and optimistic or extremely irritable; Unrealistic, grandiose beliefs about ones abilities or powers; sleeping very little; racing thoughts; rapid speech; highly distractible; impaired judgment; impulsiveness; acting recklessly without thinking about consequences; and delusions and hallucinations in severe cases. Common signs of bipolar depression may include: feeling hopeless, sad, or empty; irritability; inability to experience pleasure; fatigue or loss of energy; appetite or weight changes; sleep problems; concentration problems; feelings of worthlessness or guilt; and thoughts of death or suicide. It is important to note that many of the symptoms of this disorder can mirror those of other mental health disorders, therefore it is best to speak with a qualified professional such as a

psychologist or psychiatrist for confirmation of a diagnosis.

Bipolar disorder is treatable and in fact many people who have been diagnosed with this disease are able to manage their symptoms and maintain successful and happy lives. Treatment of this disorder may include medications, such as mood stabilizers, anti-depressants, or anti-psychotics; Psychotherapy, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, or family therapy; self-management strategies, and education; and even complementary health approaches, such as meditation, faith, and prayer. For more information about Bipolar and related disorders talk with your PCP or schedule an appointment with a certified mental health professional.

## Couple Concerns vs. Parenting Concerns

In the realm of Structural Family Therapy, it is important to understand the dynamic of the couple concerns between the parents and how this may dictate and impact the parenting of the couple. This is important to be aware of in order to understand the impact that this will subsequently have on the children.

It is important to understand that although the couple issues may be kept from the children, the children are a good thermometer and are able to measure, and act upon, the stress that their parents are feeling and experiencing, often reacting to non-verbal cues that the parents may not be aware of.

Negative behaviors may be demonstrated by the children in an attempt to draw attention to a concern

that they are experiencing, but may not be aware of. Structural Family Therapy attempts to address parenting concerns to assist to build a strong unified parenting team, and to assist with implementing consistency for the children, thus, addressing the family dynamic as a whole.

Through this process, it is important to recognize that couple concerns are different from parenting concerns, and is an important dynamic to learn to manage. This is just one aspect that can be addressed through Structural Family Therapy.



# Stress

Stress is an aspect of human life that is nearly unavoidable; however, stress also comes along with a negative connotation. When first hearing about stress, the initial reaction is to believe stress is triggered by a negative event or experience in a person's life. While this may be true, people often tend to forget about the times stress can have a positive impact on a person. Before discussing examples of how stress can be positive, I believe it is important to recognize whether stress can be considered a thought or an emotion. To me, a person does not feel "stressed"; however, a person can feel the effects of being stressed such as anxious, scared, or excited. A person should begin by asking themselves "What thought do I have about the situation am I perceiving as most stressful". Once a person is able to identify the thinking pattern regarding the stressful situation, they have an increased chance of reacting in a more positive manner.

One example of how stress can be positive is when a person is stressing over an event that can have a good impact on them; such as stressing out about a job interview. Regarding the aforementioned technique to identifying the stressful perception, the person in this example will be able to gain a better understanding of the emotional response attached to the stress. Stress can also be utilized as a motivator in order for people to achieve goals or tasks they have yet to begin. An example of this could be a person wanting to get into better shape if they will be going on vacation. The stress would come from the perception of their appearance and can be used to exercise and eat better.

As previously mentioned stress is a part of every person's life and at times may seem unmanageable. Luckily, there are adequate resources and techniques that can be utilized in order to minimize the amount of stress a person can perceive. One effective tool

for managing stress is deep breathing. This is an exercise geared toward the person focusing on breathing and becoming mindful of their thinking. When doing deep breathing the individual is encouraged to take long, deep breaths in while slowly exhaling them back out after a few seconds. Another technique that can be useful for dealing with stress comes from identifying the perception of stress and challenging the validity of the thought. In order to accomplish this technique, a person is encouraged to create an "Evidence For vs. Evidence Against" argument regarding his thought. By doing this, it encourages the individual to create situations to validate and challenge the stressful perception.



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

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