JANUARY, 2011

Ascension Counseling Center

Mind and Body Connection

If your New Year's resolution includes being healthier this year, then don't overlook your mental health. Research has shown that your mental health is critical to your physical health. Consider the following facts:

- Stress, such as family or money worries, can cause your hormone and blood sugar levels to change. This happens because stress blocks the production of insulin, a hormone that helps control blood sugar. Type 2 diabetics may have trouble keeping their blood sugar levels within their target range if stressed.
- One new study suggests that anger and the general tendency to inhibit anger, predicts heightened pain in the everyday life of female patients with fibromyalgia.
- Panic attacks can create physical symptoms of palpitations, pounding heart, or fast heart rate; sweating; trembling or shaking; shortness of breath or feelings of smothering; feelings of choking; chest pain or discomfort; and more.
- Excess stress may give you a headache, a stomachache, or just a feeling of being "on edge."
- Excess stress could also be doing a number on your mouth, teeth, gums, and overall health. The potential fallout from stress and anxiety that can affect your oral health includes: mouth sores (including canker sores and cold sores), clenching of teeth and teeth grinding (bruxism), poor oral hygiene and unhealthy eating routines, and periodontal (gum) disease or worsening of existing periodontal disease.

What you can do:

Thankfully, you can take steps to handle stressful situations, which includes:

- Learn techniques to help you relax
- Change your coping style
- Adopt a problem-solving attitude, working to confront and fix the situation at hand
- Identify and change your automatic negative thoughts. (See page 2 of this newsletter for more details.)
- Engage in regular physical activity. Exercise releases endorphins that induce a sense of well-being.
- Eat well. Proper nutrition nourishes the brain and organs so that they can function well.
- Meditate on peaceful thoughts.
- Breathe deeply so that you get enough air into your body and blow off waste products such as carbon dioxide.
- Manage your time well. (See our December newsletter for more information.)
- Learn how to get over negative events more quickly. Dwelling on negative actions, interactions, and circumstances will keep you stressed.

"Stress is an ignorant state. It believes everything is an emergency. Nothing is that important."

~ Natalie Goldberg

Get Rid of Automatic Negative Thoughts

Dr. Daniel Amen reports that our overall state of mind has a certain tone or flavor based largely on the types of thoughts we think. When the deep limbic system is overactive, it sets the mind's filter on "negative." People who are depressed have one dispiriting thought following another. The lens through which they see themselves, others, and the world has a dim grayness. They are suffering from *automatic negative thoughts (ANT).* See if you can identify any of these in your thinking patterns:

When your mind gets stuck in negative patterns, try meditating on the Serenity Prayer.

- ***Always/Never Thinking:*** Thinking in words like always, never, no one, everyone, every time, or everything. This happens when you think something that happened will "always" repeat itself, or that you'll "never" get what you want. These words are usually wrong. If you catch yourself thinking in these absolutes, stop and make yourself recall examples that disprove your all-or-nothing attitude. If you find yourself thinking "My husband never listens to me," write it down. Then write down a rational response, something like, "He's not listening now, maybe he's distracted by something else. He often listens to me."

- ***Mind Reading:*** Believing that you know what others are thinking, even though they haven't told you. Mind reading is a common cause of trouble between people. It's often a projection of what you think. Even after couples have been married for 30 years it's impossible for them to always be right about what's going on in the other person's head. Checking things out is essential to good communication. You know you are mind reading when you have thoughts such as "She's mad at me", "He doesn't like me," or "They were talking about me." You can't read anyone else's mind. You never know what others are really thinking unless they tell you. When there are things you don't understand, ask others to clarify them.

- ***Labeling:*** Attaching a negative label to yourself or to someone else. Whenever you do this you stop your ability to take a clear look at the situation. Some examples of negative labels are *jerk, arrogant, frigid,* and *irresponsible.* Negative labels are very harmful, because whenever you call yourself or someone else a jerk or arrogant, you lump that person in your mind with all of the "jerks" or "arrogant people" that you've ever known and you become unable to deal with him or her reasonably as a unique individual.

- ***Blaming:*** Blaming someone else for your own problems. This is the most poisonous ANT of all. When you do it you become a passive victim of circumstances and you make it very difficult to do anything to change your situation. Many relationships are ruined by people who blame their partners when things go wrong. They take little responsibility for their problems. They will make statements like, "That wouldn't have happened if you had…", or "How was I supposed to know…" The "blame game" hurts your personal sense of power. Take personal responsibility for your problems in order to change them.

> **Automatic Negative Thoughts are cynical, gloomy, and complaining thoughts that just seem to keep marching in all by themselves.**
> ***~Daniel Amen***

Milestones

Disaster Training

All staff at ACC has participated in the Red Cross' emergency shelter management training sponsored by the Ascension Parish Office of Emergency Preparedness. As parish employees we will become first responders in the event of a parish-wide disaster, such as a hurricane, which requires the opening of a shelter. Visit the Ascension Parish website at www.AscensionParish.net to download emergency preparedness resources.

Early Intervention Begins

This year our early intervention program consists of 3 groups: Toward No Drug for adolescents, Guiding Good Choices for their parents, and a childcare/tutor for homework completion for other children in the family.

Toward No Drug: This free class is an effective substance abuse prevention program that focuses on students' attitudes & beliefs about drugs, self-control, and decision-making skills. The group facilitator is Treniece Landry, Counselor in Training with Ascension Counseling Center.

Guiding Good Choices: Learn the positive parenting skills that increase school success and protect children from problems such as substance use, violence, and risky behaviors. The groups are interactive and sessions include: How to prevent drug abuse in your family, setting clear family expectations on drugs & alcohol, managing family conflicts & more. The group facilitator is Aaron Ambeau, LCSW-BACS, Special Needs Counselor with Ascension Parish School Board.

Child Care/Tutoring Group: Other children in the family not in the Toward No Drug class may attend a separate group in the building with structured learning activities or homework completion.

The classes meet every Wednesday from 6 - 8 pm at Ascension Counseling Center, Gonzales beginning Jan. 12th and run for 7 weeks. Advanced registration is required. Call Treniece at Ascension Counseling Center, 621-8599, to register for all of these classes.

Treniece Landry, Counselor In Training

www.AscensionParish.Net

Ascension Counseling Center

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Helping individuals and families change behaviors, change lives.

Ascension Counseling Center provides comprehensive therapeutic services to individuals and families in an effort to foster healthy coping skills that will improve their quality of life.

Hours

Gonzales:

Business Hours
Mon - Thur: 8 am - 5:30 pm; Fri: 8 am - noon

Counseling Hours
Mon - Thur: 7 am - 8 pm; Fri: 8 am - noon

Psychiatrist Hours
Monday, Tuesday & Thursday: 8 am - 6 pm

Donaldsonville:

Business Hours
Wednesday: 7:30 am - 5:30 pm

Counseling Hours
Wednesday: 7:30 am - 5:30 pm

Psychiatrist Hours
4th Thursday of the Month: 8 am - 11:30 am

Upcoming January Events

Mondays:

- Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment group: 5 - 7 pm, Gonzales.
- Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group, 4 - 6 pm & 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- Women in Recovery, 4 - 6 pm, Gonzales.

Tuesdays:

- Anger Management: ongoing, join any time, 4 - 5 pm, Gonzales.
- Nurturing Parenting, adult & children groups: 5 - 7:30 pm, Gonzales.
- Smoking Cessation, 5 - 6 pm, Gonzales

Wednesdays:

- Early Intervention: Toward No Drug (Adolescents), 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- Early Intervention: Guiding Good Choices (Parents), 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment group: 2:30 - 4:30 pm, Donaldsonville.
- Smoking Cessation, 10 am, Donaldsonville

Thursdays:

- Adolescent Right Choices group, 4 - 6 pm, Gonzales.
- Anxiety Reduction group: 4 - 5 pm, Gonzales.

12th:

- Living Strong Cancer Survivors group, 3 - 4 pm, Donaldsonville.
- Free HIV/AIDS testing (no blood/no needles), 10 am - 2 pm, Gonzales.

26th:

- Free HIV/AIDS testing (no blood/no needles), 10 am 2 pm, Donaldsonville.
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, 10:30 am - noon, lunch provided, Donaldsonville.