MARCH/APRIL 2015

Ascension Counseling Center

Director: Suzanne Berteau Hamilton *Parish President: Tommy Martinez*

Editor: Dawnyelle Bennett

COPING WITH CHRONIC PAIN

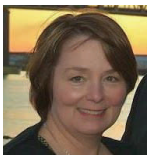
Living with chronic pain can be, well, painful. Aside from the physical pain we also have to learn to cope with the emotional, behavioral, cognitive and social aspects that chronic pain affects. Chronic pain is a condition that lasts longer than three months and the source of the pain may be difficult to discover and treat. Chronic pain is associated with diabetic neuropathy, fibromyalgia, chronic bladder pain, back and neck pain, and chronic pelvic pain to name a few. Managing stressors associated with chronic pain won't cure the underlying problem, but it can help us live a more fulfilled life.

In our upcoming 8 week group, Coping with Chronic Pain, we will be exploring our values and creating goals to help live those values. We will discuss the importance of exercise to our wellbeing and learning to pace our activities and listening to our body to understand when we have over exerted. We will learn to identify unhelpful thinking styles that keep us bogged down and start thinking in new and calming ways. Chronic pain can bring up angry, depressed feelings at the unfairness of the diagnosis and/or injury and learning to manage anger and begin forgiving others and ourselves can help us find peace with our new way of being. Improving communication skills with our family and friends can help them understand what living with pain is and is not. These skills can also help with interactions with the medical team managing pain care and improve the care received.

We will also experience a different meditation or mindfulness activity weekly. Studies have shown that meditation or mindfulness activities improve our quality of life when living with chronic pain. However, if counting breaths is not calming for you, learning another meditative technique might prove beneficial.

Finally, we will be journaling to learn when our pain is at its best and worst. Journaling will help us identify our triggers for increased pain, what our sleep patterns are and how that affects pain levels and be an effective tool when communicating with the medical team managing our pain.

Our community group will begin on April 2nd at 10am. We will meet weekly for 8 weeks and the session will be 1 ½ hours long. The group will be limited to 10 people. If you are interested , call Ava Gerald at 450-1162 to schedule your ½ hour intake session.



Ava Gerald, LPC

SPRING CLEAN YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Soon we will smell newly bloomed tulips, cut the grass, clean out our closets of old winter clothes, and begin our other pre-summer routines. Springtime is full of fresh starts and new beginnings, a time of renewal. So what better time than spring to give a little attention to renewing our mental health? Taking a little time to focus on our needs and discover the things that make us happy helps us gain a clear and refreshed mind. Here are a few tips to follow when spring-cleaning your mental health:

1. **Create a to-do list:** Instead of your common project list, create a list of things you want to achieve emotionally over the next few months. Include dreams—things you've always wanted to do– as well as long-term and short-term goals that are easily achievable. Perhaps you have been wanting to reconnect with that old high school friend or maybe you wish you knew how to play the guitar. Put them on your list!

2. **Enhance your physical health:** Physical wellness is an important part of sustaining mental well-being. Exercising and eating healthy are a big part of physical wellness but often are hard to incorporate in your routine. Try something simple like replacing soda and coffee with herbal teas, or eating a small portion of dark chocolate instead of a donut or other sugary snack.

3. **Renew your spirit:** Yoga, Pilates, and meditation often lend themselves to mental cleansing. Taking just a few minutes each day to relax by yourself can make a huge difference and reduce negative energy and thoughts that may be consuming your day. New beginnings and healthy steps toward better living can help us rid ourselves of negative emotions and built up stress that may be bringing us down. Remember that each day is a fresh start—just like spring.

ADJUST TO DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

Daylight Savings is here, some are excited for the start of longer and warmer days, while others are only thinking of the fact that they will lose an hour of sleep. According to experts, adjusting to the lost hour of sleep in the spring is harder than adjusting to the gained hour of sleep in the fall. Experts offer a few suggestions to help deal with the loss of an hour of sleep:

• Stick to your normal routine. Go to bed at the same time and wake up at the same time as you normally do

• Children should go about their routines normally as well, including eating and nap times.

• Expose yourself and your family to sunlight - it encourages energy and makes you feel awake.

All year long, make sure you are getting the adequate amount of sleep, not just during Daylight Savings Time.

TRAINING & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

SOLUTION FOCUSED THERAPY FOR COUPLES

On February 12, 2015 Courtney LeBlanc, Ava Gerald, and Tatiyana Curry attended a training in Baton Rouge called Solution Focused Therapy for Couples An Evidenced Based Approach for Dynamic Results. Solution focused therapy steps away from the idea that problems must be solved and instead focuses on the idea that solutions must be built. Solution Focused Therapy works with couples to help them focus on moving forward and how to positively shape their preferred future together to build the relationships they desire rather than argue about problems that have already occurred. The counselors in attendance will be implementing strategies learned at the training into their therapy sessions.

ACC AND GIRL SCOUT TROOP 10014

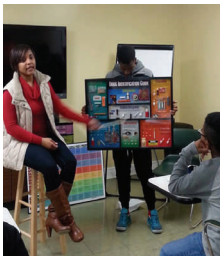
On Saturday February, 27th, Laurice Harrison gave a presentation to a group of 8 girl scouts from Troop 10014 about the dangers of alcohol and drugs, and how to say no. In addition to speaking on the dangers of drugs, she talked to them about bullying and self-respect and answered questions about what a counselor is and what a counselor does as well as when to talk to one. She helped the troop members earn patches for respecting themselves and respecting others.

ST. ELIZABETH'S GIRLS DAY OUT

Ascension Counseling Center was an exhibitor at St. Elizabeth's Girl's Day Out on March 7th. It was a fun day of health and wellness activities for women of all ages. ACC spoke to the women who visited our booth about the importance of maintaining mental health. The ladies were also given information about community groups offered at our agency such as our Anger Management Classes and Coping with Chronic Pain groups. ACC also served as a resource for those individuals who are looking for help.

PINK GOES RED

Ascension Counseling Center's adolescent counselor, Laurice Harrison participated in a health seminar for



kids. The event focused on heart awareness and addressed obesity, eating disorders, teen substance abuse and health & hygiene. Laurice led a break out session called " Teen Drug & Alcohol Use". She presented on the dangers of substance abuse and how drugs and alcohol affects your body. Pink Goes Red was held in Donaldsonville at the Lemann Center. The event was sponsored by the Phi Sigma Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. & Bright Futures CLC.

COUNSELOR AWARNESS MONTH

Counseling Awareness Month is an annual observance that is celebrated in April to educate the public about the role of counselors in helping individuals to live healthier, happier, and more productive lives. It is sponsored by the American Counseling Association (ACA). Counseling is a collaborative effort between a counselor and a client. According to the ACA, "Professional counselors help clients identify goals and potential solutions to problems which cause emotional turmoil; seek to improve communication and coping skills; strengthen self-esteem; and promote behavior change and optimal mental health."

BENEFITS OF COUNSELING

The main benefit of counseling is that it helps you to have a life which you can more fully enjoy and appreciate. It can help you to become the sort of person you want to be. It can also help you to more deeply enjoy your important relationships. You might use therapy to:

- Feel better about yourself
- Feel more at peace, more comfortable, or more secure in the world
- Feel more successfully (and more joyfully) connected with others (including your spouse/partner)
- Reduce stress (which promotes physical health too)
- Work through problems with a skilled, and compassionate professional
- Identify your goals
- Learn new behaviors and/or responses which can help you to achieve your goals
- Establish ways and techniques for reaching your goals
- Understand your own thoughts, feelings, and responses better
- Understand your loved ones better
- Have a safe and friendly ear; someone to use as a sounding board
- Speak with a skilled and interested professional about your fears and perceptions
- Talk with a compassionate professional about troubling or private concerns

SOURCE: www.counseling.org

www.AscensionParish.Net/MH

ASCENSION COUNSELING CENTER

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HELPING INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES CHANGE BEHAVIORS AND 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 and Tuesday: 8 am - 6 pm

Donaldsonville:

Business Hours

Wednesday: 7:30 am - 5:30 pm

MONTHLY EVENTS

Mondays:

- ***Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group***, 10– 12 pm & 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment group***, 4 - 6 pm, Gonzales.

Tuesdays:

- ***Women's Empowerment Group,*** 10 - 11:30 am, Gonzales.
- ***Nurturing Parenting, adult & children groups***: 5 - 7:30 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Anger Management Class,*** 4 - 5 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Stop Smoking Group***, 4 - 6 pm, Gonzales
- ***Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group***, 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.

Wednesdays:

- ***Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group:*** 1 pm, Donaldsonville.
- ***Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment group***, 3 - 4 pm, Donaldsonville.
- ***Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group:*** 10 - 12 pm & 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Living Strong Cancer Survivors group***, 3 - 4 pm, Donaldsonville. 2nd Wed of each month.
- ***Grandparents Raising Grandchildren***, 10:30 am - noon, lunch provided, Donaldsonville, 3rd Wed of each month

Thursdays:

- ***Adult Substance Abuse Treatment group:*** 6 - 8 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment group***, 4 - 6 pm, Gonzales.
- ***Anxiety Reduction group***: 4 - 5 pm, Gonzales.

At Ascension Counseling Center you are at the center of your own care. We aim to treat you the way you want to be treated, with dignity and respect. If you are not receiving the services you want in the way that you want them, please speak to your counselor or ask to speak with Lisa Weber-Curry, Clinical manger (225-450-1172) or Suzanne Hamilton , Director (225-450-1160).