



Contra Costa Psychological Association Spring 2009

PRESIDENT'S NOTE, by Candia Smith, DMH

President's Message – Spring 2009

As you can see by this newsletter, things are blooming and budding in CCPA. Our new newsletter editor, Sarah Wood, has ideas about how to put our members in the spotlight. This looks like a great way to find out more about each other and know how best to use the resources that we have in this great group. Please consider contacting her about either a longer formal interview or a brief glimpse at you and your work. Thanks Sarah for your inspiration and labor.

Freeing herself from the Newsletter beat, which she has done so admirably for 7 years! Susan Snyder will be joining up with that other Super Hero of service in our board, Kerstin Gutierrez, on the Programs committee. Thank goodness Kerstin finally got a co-chair to help. She's done an amazing job keeping our dinner meetings and workshops scheduled and executed with interesting and educational speakers. I already hear rumbles about how much better it is going to get with Susan to lean on. I think our next Annual Meeting will be at least as stunningly good as the last one. Thanks Andy.

Our ever hard working past president, Karyn Goldberg-Boltz, is teaming up with Mike Cheney to analyze the effectiveness of our I & R system. We want to make sure that the effort everyone puts into this is working for our members and our community.

Last Sunday our volunteers for vets group met for the first time. Carol Salacka had a lot of information for us about the systems we will be interacting with. Did you know she's a Retired Lt. Col.? We decided to try and meet monthly for group consultation and to share successes we are having at connecting with the referral systems out there. Carol did such a great job, Beth Ferree and others are encouraging her to get together a CE presentation on treating vets. Hopefully we'll get a preview at one of our quarterly dinner meetings soon.

I'm just beginning to realize how good it is to be President. I have a tremendously qualified board to run the show and I get to spout out all kinds of wild ideas. One idea I'm hoping to enlist some help with, is a singles' event for psychologists and their 'dates'. A date would be a person of the psychologist's gender choice, who they know is attractive, but for one reason or another is not someone they are attracted to. I'd like to create this event and offer it to the Alameda, San Francisco, Marin and Napa/Solano psychological associations' members. If anyone is interested in joining me in the Folge, please let me know. I'm gonna need help. It's all about fun, networking and looking for someone to be with on a Friday Night. I'd like to invite all the non-member psychologists in Contra Costa to this and do some recruiting, to quote Harvey Milk.

Speaking of Friday nights, our First Friday event grows each month. So far no one has found a more hospitable venue than Scott's garden room. It's nice in that it isn't much bar-like. I'm more inspired to order a cup 'o tea than a cocktail in the pretty setting. There's a lot of variety in what people order. I see more of us are taking advantage of the good appetizers and nosh like items on the menu. Remember to ask for separate checks! We get a group of tables together and there is a fair amount of table hopping as people catch up with other members they don't get to see often enough. If you haven't joined us yet, I hope you do soon.

Lastly, I hope a couple of you will consider working on the board. It's hard to describe how efficient, supportive and humorous this group is. We could use co-chairs for many of the board positions. Or you could volunteer simply to be a committee member to one of the board chairs. Come to a meeting and check it out! Our Board meets the Second Tuesday of the Month 11:30 to 12:50 at the offices of Andrew Pojman. It's so good to be President; you might want to start in that direction too!

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**Current Approaches to the Treatment of Trauma:
The Shift from Cognition to Affect Regulation**

Conference Sponsored by UCLA Extension and Lifespan Learning Institute – March 6-9, 2009

Summary by: Lorraine Granit, Ph.D.

Presenters: Stephen Porges, Martha Stark, Dan Siegel, Allan Schore, Bessel van der Kolk, Pat Ogden, Diana Fosha, Francine Sharpiro

As much as I would like to summarize the entire weekend, there is hardly the time nor space, nor have I fully digested this banquet of nourishing ideas. Perhaps I'll begin with a few of the take home messages. First, for those suffering from PTSD, whether from one incident or early ongoing traumatic parenting practices, there is no convincing them they are suffering from cognitive distortions. They do not feel safe and must be helped to feel safe at the neuro-biological level before change can occur at the cognitive level. Second, not all those who have suffered trauma develop PTSD. Research reveals that those from secure backgrounds seem to be insulated and resilient. Perhaps their prefrontal cortical connections to their limbic system is robust. Third, body-focused treatment has been shown to be an essential component of recovery.

It was Stephen Porges' work on the vagus nerve, one of the cranial nerves originating from deep in the brain stem, that captured my attention. I have been following his research for several years and was looking forward to his presentation. He did not disappoint. I will attempt a nutshell summary of his astonishing work.

The vagus mediates our response to stress. It connects to the viscera, heart, lungs, HPA axis, and the facial muscles and nerves. The oldest branch of the vagus, present in reptiles, is responsible for the freeze/faint reaction to danger, where the heart rate and breathing slow, the parasympathetic nervous system in humans is engaged, and the entire system becomes numb to pain and prepared for death. This system is activated when in mortal danger, and/or danger where there is no escape (whether a reptile unable to outrun a predator, or a child being abused by those responsible for her safety).

The newer mammalian branch activates the sympathetic nervous system for fight or flight by up-regulating heart rate and breathing, shutting down digestion, causing the auditory nerves to scan lower frequency background noise, facial muscles to tense, eyes to squint, etc.

The third branch of the vagus is the real grabber. When one feels safe, then this branch facilitates social engagement. The heart and breathing are down regulated in a controlled fashion, the face relaxes and eyes open and soften, and one is open to and signals readiness for social contact.

It is thought that those suffering from PTSD get stuck in the freeze/faint mode because of the inability or perceived inability to escape and the isolation of the traumatic event or events. Hence, triggering stimuli disable these people from taking effective action; like the patient of mine who froze up whenever a man made inappropriate advances because she was so traumatized by her abusive father. Her parasympathetic bias in these triggering situations precluded the possibility of sympathetic action, e.g. removing herself from the situation or assertively setting a boundary. Both Schore and Porges think of parasympathetic engagement as the physiological substrate of dissociation.

Porges believes that face to face therapy can be problematic since the social engagement system is not online much of the time for those traumatized. He uses sound to repair the social engagement branch of the vagal system in his research with autistic children. The vagus is hooked into the auditory system, as mentioned above, and music appears to stimulate the social engagement branch of the vagus. Within weeks he has autistic children smiling and making eye contact. I often suggest music to highly anxious and traumatized adult patients. Apparently it is more than an immediate stress reliever, but perhaps heals damaged nerves!

Pat Ogden and Bessel van der Kolk emphasize physical engagement. They recommend integrating physical activities into patients' lives as well as engaging patients at the physical level. Pat finds that tracking bodily states is integrative. I find that to be true as well. Even if paying attention to ones' internal sensations, as one would in various mindfulness practices, produces no insights or catharses, the very process itself of attending to the body seems to unfreeze it and mobilize effective action. Directing attention in this way may be a way of connecting the regulatory prefrontal cortex to the dis-regulated limbic system which feeds into the vagal response. Also, if I have a patient who begins to relive a traumatic memory, often I will get them up out of the therapy chair and moving around. This counters the frozen state of mortal fear and grounds them in the present.



I found myself thinking about the so-called alternative therapies I studied in the 70s, like gestalt, Gendlin's focusing, bio-energetics, and psychodrama, realizing that research is now enabling us to understand their healing power and re-integrate them into current practice. In fact, Pat and Bessel spoke of using psychodrama as a way of enabling patients to engage in re-enactments with positive outcomes.

Siegel, Schore, and Fosha spoke to the healing nature of the therapeutic bond. Since those who are traumatized were often isolated and even betrayed by those who they relied on and have therefore diminished capacity to trust, the empathetic connection with a therapist also strengthens the social engaging and self regulating prefrontal cortex. Current research has replicated results from a decades old study, that the therapeutic bond and the skill of the therapist correlated more strongly with successful outcome than type of therapy and any other variables.

No discussion of PTSD therapy would be complete without mention of the research showing EMDR to be highly effective in trauma recovery. Shapiro says that EMDR is not done in a vacuum and the therapeutic relationship and skill of the therapist are crucial. There was much talk about the neurobiology behind EMDR, including left/right brain integration.

Finally, I will leave you with a truly new and paradigm shifting idea. It was noted that depression is a consistent symptom of PTSD. It was also noted that most depressed patients have had identifiable early childhood trauma. It was suggested that depression may not be a separate psychiatric diagnosis but in fact in most if not all cases a symptom of PTSD. In fact, PTSD may be at the heart of most psychiatric diagnosis, that is, trauma, particularly early childhood trauma, causes psychiatric illness. Twin studies have revealed that in twins raised apart, psychiatric disorders often appear in only one, including psychoses. While genetics is a contributor, early life experience may be the strongest predictor.

Lorraine Granit is a UC Berkeley educated psychologist in practice for over 35 years in Walnut Cree, specializing in teen and adult psychotherapy and marital counseling. She treats all of the usual psychiatric disorders from the point of view of her understanding of the importance of trust and affect regulation within the context of a co-regulating, empathically attuned therapeutic alliance. She also provides case consultation to other therapists. She is now offering 3 hour workshops on stress management and emotional hygiene once a month. She can be contacted at 945-8008.

Cerebral Dominance

Summary by Candia Smith, DMH

Conference by Dr. Nikita Katz, M.D., Ph.D., Sponsored by INR (Institute for Natural Resources)

This was a very interesting way to spend a day. Plus, Susan Snyder went with me and we had a great lunch. The instructor was very knowledgeable and easy to listen to. After the fact I was amazed at how many pages of notes I had taken. His style seemed so tangential and conversational, and yet he managed to pack in data. Plus, the hand out has many articles on this area that he didn't even discuss in the lecture. Quite the bonus.

Dr. Katz' style ran something like this. "Research. Now there is word that has no meaning."

Did you know that dental care has a big impact on brain function? Women who are pregnant and have dental infections may be affecting aspects of their child's development from neural tube defects in early pregnancy to myelinization in late pregnancy.

The syllabus promised that participant would be able to :

- 1) Explain how brain cells function and communicate
- 2) Describe the differences between the brain's left and right hemispheres
- 3) Outline the role of the brain in clinical depression and creativity
- 4) Describe oral care procedures for patients who have had strokes
- 5) Explain the difference between a left-brain patient and a right-brain patient
- 6) List ways in which men and women differ in brain function.

Dr. Katz breezed through all that and left us wondering what our cell phones are doing to our brains. I would highly recommend this seminar when it comes through again. I'll be rereading my notes and absorbing this material for at least a year.

I understand that you are a recent addition to CCPA. How long have you been practicing in the area? I have been living in this area since 1990, took some time off to raise my children, and then began working at the Wellness Community in 1997. I recently opened my private practice in Walnut Creek, conveniently coinciding with the economic downturn.

From where did you move? I moved back up here from L.A. In Los Angeles, I worked part-time as the psychologist for a private school, completed a two-year post doctoral training program in psychotherapy at the Wright Institute, and then had a private practice.

You work with the Wellness Community? What portion of your time do you spend there and what type of clinical work do you do? I am at The Wellness Community two full days a week, and my work involves facilitating support groups for cancer patients and their families. I am particularly involved with women dealing with gynecological and breast cancers. Additionally, I supervise interns who participate in our year long training program.

What kind of work do you do in your private practice the rest of the time? And what percentage of your time are spending doing private practice versus work with the Wellness Community? I am also in private practice two days a week. I have a general practice, working with individuals, couples and families. I am particularly interested in health psychology, issues of loss and grief, and life transitions.

You mentioned your concern about the sustainability of the Wellness Community due to the economy decline. I personally think that the Wellness Community is invaluable. Maybe you could update all of us on all that it offers in order to heighten awareness of how useful it is for cancer patients and their families. The Wellness Community is an international nonprofit organization that offers many services to cancer patients and their families, all at no charge to participants. Psychosocial services include support groups facilitated by licensed therapists, educational seminars, stress reduction programs, and creative expression programs. For further information, please call The Wellness Community at (925) 933-0107. Our web address is www.twcha.org. Our street address is 3276 McNutt Ave., not far from the Pleasant Hill Bart station.

Is there anything else that you would like to say about yourself? Non-work interests? Family stuff? At this point in my life, I am striving for balance - between the richness and challenge of personal relationships, clinical work, and self-care. For fun, I love to read, and have been in a wonderful book club for 11 years. I also enjoy gardening, long walks, and being out in nature. How fortunate we are to live in such a beautiful area!

Groups Offered in Contra Costa County

A Healthy Divorce/Separation Group

Are you divorced or separated, struggling with the ending of your relationship and feeling it continues to be difficult to manage? Do you sometimes wonder how you are going to get through the next conversation with your former partner or soon-to-be former partner? I work primarily with people engaged in some aspect of divorce: custody decisions, communication difficulties, children, step-parents, etc. Groups are a unique environment to work through your fears and frustrations with people who may have similar experiences and with a professional who can help to support and focus group members as they work on moving forward in their lives. **Target Population:** Divorced or separated men and women. **Location:** San Ramon.

Group Size: Maximum 8. **Age Range:** adult. **Gender:** Both. **Meeting Time:** Monday, 6:30-8pm. **Time Limited?** 8 week initial commitment
Shendl Tuchman, Psy.D. 510-201-3435. dr.tuchman@earthlink.net

Stress Management Groups

Learn the latest self care and self-management techniques for reducing anxiety, relieving stress, living in a calmer state of mind and reducing vulnerability to illness

Population: adults wanting to feel better, perform better and manage anxiety. 1181 Boulevard Way, **Size:** 10. **Age Range:** Adults of any age. **Gender:** Both. **Meeting Day** One Saturday (or possibly one Monday.) **Time** 2 to 4pm (Monday 7-9pm.) **Time Limited?** one time, repeated each month (possible follow up session)

Lorraine Granit, Ph.D (925) 945-8008. epacts5081@mypacks.net

Women's Psychotherapy Group

Insight oriented, psychodynamic women's group for women in their 20's , 30's , 40's
Location: Oakland. **Group Size:** 6. **Age Range** 25-45, **MeetingTime:** Alternate Tuesday

evenings, 5:30-7 p.m. **Time Limited?** On-going
Fran Krieger-Lowitz, Ph.D. (510) 841-2007 drfrankrieger@aol.com



CCPA NEWSLETTER

Groups, cont

Therapy Group for Therapists

This process-oriented co-ed psychotherapy group offers a safe environment for personal and professional growth. This group has been meeting for over eight years, and is a powerful antidote for the isolation of private practice. Members learn more about the healing power of group interaction, increase their interpersonal skills and enhance their self-awareness as individuals and therapists. We currently have openings for one or two male therapists who are interested in doing this deep work in a supportive group setting. Note: This group is designed for therapists who are interested in working on their own issues and have been in, or are currently in, individual therapy. Target Population: Psychotherapists interested in learning about and improving their interpersonal skills and enhancing their self-awareness as individuals and therapists. Location: Lafayette, near BART - Wheelchair Accessible. Group Size: Maximum 6-7 Age Range: 30-50. Gender: Both. Meeting Time: Thursdays 9:00 – 10:30am (may change in July, 2009.) Length of Meeting: 1 ½ hours .Time Limited? Long term, ongoing, Run by Ann Steiner (see page 8)

Men's Groups

I lead two long-term support/process groups for high functioning men. The goals of the groups are for the men to discuss their lives in a meaningful and authentic way and to gain insight, feedback and support. The range of issues includes marital problems and divorce, depression and anxiety, work difficulties, fathering, and forming intimate male friendships. The men work on fundamental emotional and cognitive patterns and challenge the limitations of conventional definitions of masculinity. As the men integrate into the group they experience it as highly rewarding and make profound changes in their lives. Population: High Functioning Men. Location: Walnut Creek. Group Size: 6-8, Age Range: 35 – 80, Time: Mon, 7:30 p.m. - 9:00 pm and Wednesday, 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. Bruce Feingold, Ph.D. (925) 945-1315, bhfein@aol.com (for Colleagues Only)

Chronic Medical Illness Support Group.

Isolation and loss of connection with others is a major issue for most people dealing with chronic pain and illness This wonderful, warm, long-term support group which addresses hidden disabilities, chronic pain, and life-altering medical challenges is designed to enrich your current individual therapy and help expand your client's support network. Members of this unique group inspire each other to make the most of life with limitations, reduce their isolation and add more compassion for themselves. Population: Adults dealing with chronic medical conditions and or chronic pain, does not include terminal illnesses. Location: Lafayette, near BART - Wheelchair Accessible. Group Size: Maximum 6-7. Age Range: 30-60. Gender: Both. Meeting Time: Thursdays, 3:30-5:00. Time Limited? Long term, ongoing. **Ann Steiner Ph.D. (See below for contact information)**

Consultation Group for Licensed Psychotherapists

This twice monthly, facilitated consultation group is designed for therapists who want to look closely at their clinical work, deepen their understanding of their client's processes and sharpen their skills. This case consultation group combines member's case presentations, informal didactic presentations and discussion. Presentations include therapeutic framework, working diagnoses, client's history and cultural context, different diagnostic and treatment planning issues as they relate to treatment challenges, family of origin issues, and impact of medical issues if any. The quality and meaning of the transference is explored, while acknowledging the informative value of countertransference. CE Credit available for MFT's and LCSW's, CE for psychologist is pending. Group Size: Maximum 6-7, Age Range: 30-55, Currently Female, open to men as well, Time: Thursdays, twice monthly, 10:30am – 12:15 pm (may change in July, 2009) Time Limited? Long term, ongoing **Ann Steiner, Ph.D., MFT (925) 962-0060, DrSteiner@DrSteiner.com, www.DrSteiner.com**

We invite you to utilize the CCPA Newsletter as a format for sharing your knowledge and information with your colleagues, thereby with the community at large.

The following dates are submission deadlines for future publications:

- June 15, 2009 (Summer Newsletter)
- September 15, 2009 (Fall Newsletter)
- January 15, 2010 (Winter Newsletter)
- April 15, 2010 (Spring Newsletter)

These dates are subject to change

The following prices are in effect for advertisements:

- 1/4 Page ad \$30.00
- 1/2 page \$60.00
- 3/4 page \$100.00

(advertisement for office space is free to CCPA members)

E-mail submissions by the deadline to sarahwoodphd@yahoo.com

CCPA NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2009



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 15th - Dr Robin Walser presents Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: An Experiential Approach to Behavioral Change

June Quarterly Meeting (Date TBA)- Dr. Shendl Tuchman presents on Collaborative Divorce

September Quarterly Meeting (Date TBA)- Dr. Rick Pollack presents on The Impact of Homework on Learning and Emotional Development

Note from the Editor- After many hours of playing with Print Shop, I have attempted to do what someone with expertise in formatting has done in previous newsletters. This is my disclaimer and explanation for why the newsletter may look a bit less polished. If there are any errors, please accept my apology and perhaps keep in mind my inexperience in such things. Thanks for all of the contributions. Your new Editor, Sarah E. Wood, Ph.D.