

STANISLAUS COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY SERVICES

CULTURAL COMPETENCY UPDATE

...a newsletter to address cultural issues that enable us to effectively work in cross cultural situations.

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Inside this issue: Mindfulness 1/2 **Meeting Highlights**

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BHRS Cultural Competence, **Equity and Social Justice** Committee meets on the 2nd Monday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in the Redwood Room, 800 Scenic Drive



Mindfulness Colette West, BHS II

"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response, lies our growth and our freedom"

-Viktor E. Frankl, Neurologist, Psychiatrist, Holocaust Survivor-

Recently, opportunity was provided to attend BHRS training by Dorbea Carey, on Mindfulness. It was both thought provoking and exciting. Dorbea presented definitions from Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD, Scientist, "Mindfulness: paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally".

Dorbea Carey shared that recent studies performed at Harvard University, using MRI, proved that meditation 27 minutes per day over an eight week period literally increases the brains gray matter in the parts of the brain where it is most needed.

Participants in the study were practicing mindfulness exercises, and this is all it took to stimulate a major increase in gray matter density in the hippocampus, the part of the brain connected with self-awareness, compassion and introspection.

Per Sue McGreevey, a Harvard Medical School Instructor "Participant-reported reductions in stress also were correlated with decreased gray-matter density in the amygdala, which is known to play an important role in anxiety and stress. None of these changes were seen in the control group".

In other words; simple mindfulness meditation is effective to reform and strengthen the brain construct, increasing resilience and cognition. The amazing thing is that the simple act of disciplining thoughts for 27 minutes daily, expanded into increased focus, alertness, and clarity of thought throughout the remainder of the day, much like a brisk walk will do.

Dorbea led attendees to practice different types of mindfulness meditation, including walking meditation, and an eating meditation. The basic breathing meditation is as simple as finding a quiet space and an alert position in which to focus. Direct your attention to your own breathing, while gently counting exhalations. Your thoughts will skip away to something else, as is normal. Simply non-judgmentally bring your attention back to counting your exhalations. Yes, this is the exercise.

Dorbea Carey shared that for some folks, 6% or so, counting breaths can lead to distracted un-natural breathing and recommends they instead focus on the body, or practice walking meditation.

Know that the brain is alive! This is what Neuroplasticity is about. Our brains are live-wired, not hard-wired. By spending time training the brain to stay focused on counting exhalations, we can build strength of focus, and improve attention in all aspects of life.

Mindfulness exercise results in the following:

- -Decreased Amygdala size (associated with worry/stress)
- -Stronger connection between Amygdala and Prefrontal Cortex (Prefrontal Cortex calms Amygdala more effectively)
- -Increased grey matter/cortical thickness in areas of the brain associated with self-regulatory processes, executive functioning, learning, and MEMORY (Grow that Hippocampus!)

-Reduced activity in the Default Mode Center (equates to mind wandering and self-referential ideas)

To summarize, while you cannot control your stress response (its automatic) you can control your relaxation response. You must actively relax. Just ONE conscious breath begins to activate your Vagus nerve and kicks off a beautiful cascade of reduced stress, heightened awareness, opportunity to disengage autopilot, and the option of response flexibility; the ability to pause, step back, reflect, and shift perspective.

Dorbea Carey shared this mnemonic: S-T-O-P, when tempted to react.

Stop. Take a breath. Observe. Proceed.

Dorbea shared the following examples of contemporary therapy models using mindfulness in Behavioral Health; please feel free to research!

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction- Jon Kabat-Zin

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) Segal, Williams & Reasdale

Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention-(MBRP) Bowen, Chawla and Marlatt 2010

Dorbea shared that she and many fellow practitioners enjoy the Cell Phone Application "Insight Timer". I was able to easily locate Insight Timer, as well as others in Google Play Store. I'm sure you can find it in the comparable App store for Apple.

Highlights of April Cultural Competency, Equity and Social Justice Committee (CCESJC) Meeting



Video From CalMHSA Highlighting PEI Programs

Viewed video from CalMHSA Each Mind Matters California Mental Health Movement. In 2009 the California counties formed a California Mental Health Services Authority-CalMHSA. To collectively fund state wide initiatives aimed at reducing stigma, preventing suicide and improving student mental health. As counties we know that nearly 50% of adults in the United States will deal with a mental health challenge. PEl's concept behind is why do we have to wait until the individual is hospitalize to receive the services that they need. Early intervention is important and the importance of reaching out and engaging. It is very difficult for some individuals to come forward and ask for help. Items can be purchased online at Eachmindmatters.org. Empowerment Center holds an Anti-stigma Group on Fridays at 9 am. at the Empowerment Center.

Review of CLAS Standard # 1

Reviewed CLAS Standards # 1 PowerPoint presentation. The committee broke up into groups. Each group had a question to answer:

- What are Effective Care and Services?
- How does Equitable Care and Services look like?
- How can we provide Understandable Care and Services?
- How can we provide Respectful Care and Services?
- How do we integrate Cultural Beliefs and Practices in the Care & Services?
- What efforts are we making in providing Care & Services in the Preferred <u>Language</u>, <u>Health Literacy Level</u>, and Communication Needs of our clients?
- What are the elements of culture?

If you have questions or suggestions regarding Cultural Competency, please e-mail:
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