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SPRING/ SUMMER EDITION, 2007

Live, Love, Grow Strong!

271 Madison Avenue, Suite 708, New York, NY 10016

A publication of **Midtown Counseling Associates, Inc.**

Welcome!!!

I'm Ellen Gregory, M.A., LMFT, Founder and President of Midtown Counseling Associates, Inc., located on Madison Avenue, in Midtown Manhattan. I want to thank all of you for being a part of my practice and welcome you, if you are newly experiencing our services.

This newsletter provides one space for clients, friends, and colleagues to stay updated on our work, services, the growth of our practice, and the Marriage and Family Therapy profession. In addition, I hope *Live, Love, Grow Strong!* will enhance your life, your relationships, and provide you with helpful tools and resources to continue your therapeutic journey toward loving your life.

Please feel free to contact us with any topics, concerns, or areas of interest you would like addressed. We are always interested in creating new programs, and we welcome your feedback and community collaboration. I look forward to hearing from you!

Ellen Gregory, M.A., LMFT
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Childhood Abuse Effects Adult Relationships

As Marriage and Family Therapists, we are very aware of the impact childhood abuse has on adult relationships. When clients present with relationship difficulties and are in hurtful, stuck patterns, they are experiencing reactions to their partner's defense and protective mechanisms.

These behavioral mechanisms serve a purpose. Initially, when created in childhood, these mechanisms are meant for survival, and they vary, from a child who learned to tune out an overbearing mother to a child who learned to disassociate while being sexually molested. While the severity and details may be different, the need to protect themselves remains consistent.

Adult relationships are affected when partners are unaware that the way they have learned to react is rooted in childhood, and that the trauma they experienced so long ago is very much a part of their daily life.

In working with individuals, couples, and families, we explore past trauma and family-of-origin issues with clients; and, when needed, we provide in-depth healing of the trauma, so that clients can finally achieve the relationship they have been longing for.

We have developed a few specialized group

services to allow for focused healing of trauma. We offer 2 therapy groups for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse as well as trauma related to domestic violence, physical abuse and assault, and severe emotional abuse.

1. Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse and Assault Therapy Group

Sexual Victimization in childhood adversely affects the development of trusting, secure adult relationships and, most often, creates lingering symptoms of fear, anxiety, depression, anger, shame, tendency toward substance abuse, and inappropriate or non-satisfying sexual relationships.

This group provides a safe and supportive healing environment for exploring issues of child sexual abuse.

Goals of the group include:

- Breaking isolation
- Developing healthy coping skills
- Reducing shame
- Increasing self-esteem and body image
- Building healthy boundaries
- Creating satisfying relationships

....cont. as "Healing from Trauma", page 5

From the President's Desk

As always, I would like to thank all of you for being a part of my life, both professionally and personally.

Professionally, I have been working hard growing Midtown Counseling and its staff, and I am very proud of the services and environment we have created. Our new space has been well received by all, and I thank each and every one of you for your compliments and praise.

2007 has been a remarkable year, providing for growth, expansion of services offered, and staff development. I am most proud of my staff ([read about them here](#), or refer to www.midtowncounseling.com). I fully understand the value they bring, knowing I could not create what I have without them. Each issue of this newsletter will afford you, the reader, a closer look at who they are, what they are doing for our clients, their own professional development, as well as the Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) profession, and their writings.

On a personal note, I am happily awaiting the arrival of my first child; a baby boy. Brian and

I are expecting him to come mid-July. I just came back from a Western Caribbean cruise vacation last week and feel refreshed and ready for the next few months. I will be taking maternity leave from mid-July through the Labor Day weekend, returning after the holiday.

My mother, Doris, retired last year from a 34-year teaching career and is looking forward to being a grandma for the 11th time. I already have a schedule for her planned, so I can continue to grow Midtown Counseling as well as baby! ~ THANKS, MA!

Lastly, our dog Calvin, Brian's best friend of 14 years, passed away, and we are missing him. Our love of dogs brought us to Jake, a now 14 week old German Shepherd puppy. He has been part of the family for the past 6 weeks, and he came just in time for baby!

So, until next time, I wish all of you a happy Spring and Summer!!!

Ellen Gregory, M.A., LMFT

Student Internship Training Program

This coming June, we will begin our training program with Iona College, New York, to provide an internship site where a student of theirs, Ami Bhalodkar, MPH, can obtain clinical hours and supervision towards completion of a Masters Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy.

The program they offer to students, through The Department of Pastoral Counseling and Marriage and Family Therapy, requires completion of 54 graduate credits as well as a 2-year internship program.

Ami earned her first Master's degree in Public Health from Emory University and has been working in the field of HIV/AIDS for the past ten years. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in South Asian Languages and Cultures and Pre-med Studies from Columbia College. In addition to her career in public health, Ami graduated from the One Spirit Interfaith Seminary in June of 2003 as an ordained Interfaith Minister. She is a member of the faculty at the seminary, offers

spiritual counseling to individuals and couples, and performs wedding ceremonies.

Given her own multicultural background, professional experience in the HIV/AIDS field, and non-judgmental and warm nature, Ami is able to connect with others regardless of their age, gender, race, sexual orientation, culture, and/or life experiences. She has a genuine desire to help others improve the quality of their lives and is able to recognize and bring to light the best in others.

Ami has chosen to focus her future counseling career in the direction of Marriage and Family Therapy, and Midtown Counseling is excited to help her on her journey! She will receive close supervision from Ellen Gregory, M.A., LMFT, Approved Supervisor Candidate for the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, as well as Elena Hull, M.A., LMFT, CAT.

Welcome aboard Ami!!!

We Are Building a Center of MFTs

We hire three categories of clinicians:

1. Already licensed Marriage and Family Therapists
2. Post-grad clinicians still gaining clinical hours towards Licensure as a Marriage and Family Therapist*
3. Student Interns*

If you have an interest in working for us, please submit your resume and cover letter to Ellen@midtowncounseling.com

*We provide AAMFT Approved Supervision

Office Space Available

Furnished counseling offices for rent. Daytime, Friday and Saturday hours.

Madison Avenue, between 39th and 40th
Call Ellen at 646-369-0759, or email Ellen@midtowncounseling.com

Reduced Fee Services

With the Addition of our Student Training Program, we will now be able to service clients for a reduced fee.

Typically, sessions range from \$75-\$125, depending upon the service, day, and time of the appointment. With the addition of our training program, clients interested in participating can expect fees ranging from \$50-\$75.

Clients will receive quality services from highly supervised interns in a Masters Program, working towards degree completion and Licensure as a Marriage and Family Therapist.

Clients interested in reduced fee services can call us at 917-968-5599 and ask for more information.

Health Insurance

We currently do not accept any health insurance plans. For policies which allow *out-of-network psychotherapy services*, we are pleased to provide a receipt with all necessary diagnosis and service codes.

Project SOAR

(Students Opposed to Anger and Rage)

Ellen Gregory, MA, LMFT and her colleague, Shivani Nath, MA, Ph.D-C, have created an anger management group for middle school and high school children, and they have been piloting the program in a New Jersey school district.

We are pleased to announce that Midtown Counseling will offer the **Project Soar** program to middle school children in our office beginning September, 2007.

This program will teach students...

- To identify and experience a range of feelings including anger
- To understand their own patterns of behavior (thoughts, feelings and behaviors)
- To identify their own internal physical cues to feelings of anger.
- To identify self-destructive and aggressive acts by self and others. Students will learn the difference between the feeling of anger and the behavior of aggression.
- To try and understand the experience of others and identify consequences of behavior.
- To develop positive coping mechanisms to work through anger and pain.
- To resolve problems.
- To find the power and control over the expression of their healthy thoughts and feelings.
- To use a voice of ownership and self-control.
- To see how their behavior can have positive effects on their lives, and that they can win at the "game" of life.

Ellen is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in the State of New York and a Clinical Member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy. Additionally, she is the Founder and President of Midtown Counseling Associates, Inc.

Ellen will be training her staff to run Project SOAR groups as well as implementing additional family therapy components to participating students. This provides for comprehensive family services aimed at ridding unhealthy anger and aggression.

Call 917-968-5599 for more information

Creativity, Art, and Imagination in the Therapeutic Relationship

Written by Elena Hull, M.A., LMFT, CAT

The field of Expressive/Creative Arts Therapy breathes renewed life into the ancient connection of artist and healer. As a Marriage and Family Therapist and Creative Arts Therapist, I hold the belief that deep within us lives memory of the place where we were once in pure connection with ourselves, and that the therapeutic relationship can serve as the sacred ground for reunion. There exists a bridge to this place of reconnection and wholeness, one so narrow and steep that often we can only reach further by coming apart or disappearing as we once knew ourselves and re-forming again on the other side. By letting go, by experiencing the absence, we find the presence that allows us to reshape our experiences and our lives. In the therapeutic relationship, there exists a unique environment of safety to risk being in the unknown, to risk coming undone. It is when this transitional space is entered in the therapeutic relationship that I am often struck by the beauty of the work.

The "absent-presence" of transitional space creates the conditions in which the capacity to play, imagine, and create can emerge. The role of the artist/therapist is to act as a guide to and within the transitional space. The paradox is that, in order to create this space, one must attain some formlessness. One allows for formlessness in play, in improvisation, in creativity, and in surrender. I use the word surrender to mean letting go in order to receive. Stephen Nachmanovitch, in his book entitled Free Play, said, "...surrender is not defeat but rather the key to opening out into a world of delight a nonstop creation"(Nachmanovitch, 1990). He also reminds his readers that to create one has to disappear. Only unconditional surrender leads to real emptiness within which we can be free. In the transitional space we can introduce an alternative experience of our or our client's world.

In terms of reshaping experience, art is the mentor. As Stephen Levine explains in his book Poiesis, "The artist takes the world as he or she finds it and renders it new in the light of the imagination"(Levine, 1992). As artist/therapists, we come to be professional re-shapers in a sense. Expressive Arts Therapy inherently excels at aiding the process of shifting one's relationship to something. This is because the act

of producing art, of creating, is itself an act of shaping something of oneself into something new. It is a resource-oriented way of working therapeutically. What draws me most to this work is its acknowledgement, allowance for, and acceptance of suffering. To be human is to suffer, and our fear of suffering often leads us into greater suffering. As healers, we must create the space to express suffering and ultimately the transitional space which transforms suffering through its expression. We must hold the space for chaos and fragmentation by trusting that expression of one's suffering is healing in itself.

There needs to be resonance. In verbal, cognitive therapy one depends on "aha!" moments or experiences of right articulation in which the client feels what he or she is saying and the therapist can truly see those experiences. The same experience is necessary in the creation of art. It is not easy to enter the transitional space and connect to our own knowing, especially as adults. We carry in us and see ourselves and our experiences through so many filters. In creation, resonant creation, we need to let go, which goes against our composition as competent people who can keep it all together. There is a process of exploration, of uncovering or entering, that is aided by the relational aspect of therapy. As therapists, we are companions. We are companions who hold the safety, reflect the discovery, and jump in with our clients. It is our responsibility to help clients produce what they are trying to show themselves through creativity in an environment of trust.

Elena is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in the State of New York, a Licensed Creative Arts Therapist, and a Clinical Member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy.

Elena's focus is in-depth psychotherapy with individuals, specifically survivors of traumatic childhood experiences, sexual assault or abuse.

At Midtown Counseling, Elena holds the position of Clinical Supervisor and Practice Development Coordinator.

Call 917-968-5599 to work with Elena

Power in Our Relationships

Written by Melissa Kester, M.A. in MFT

This is Part I of an article series on Power Struggles in Relationships. Check our next issue for pathways to balance the power!

Sitting on an airplane for an hour waiting to take off, the trapped feeling, the questions that go unanswered, will remain in your brain until you forget them. However, this powerless situation leaves one with the basic question, "How much control do I have in my life?" At this time I would have to say 'not much'. Just when you think you have power, you start to realize you have none.

Our lives are filled with those rare moments where we feel powerful and, the rest of the time, where we feel like we have none. In general, as individuals, we do not recognize the power we have. We may find ourselves accepting behavior we really do not appreciate, saying yes when we mean no, and fearing what will happen if we do not try to appease others. Now, of course, not all of us do this on a grand scale, but most of us do experience these emotions and behaviors. It is the desire for us to belong in the culture we see ourselves in. As soon as we offer the power of ourselves over to other people, that is when we truly risk losing the person we are.

How do we prevent this from happening? How do we maintain our own persona?

We keep our power sacred.

In every relationship we enter, from family to co-workers, we enter a power dynamic. There are many roles we as individuals play in these relationships: dictator, benevolent ruler, partner, assistant, or the servant. Although, we may not always like the positions we hold, they are the ones we have learned consciously or unconsciously. We have evolved into these roles according to the power positions we played in our family or have seen demonstrated to us by our family.

They are not the roles we always have to maintain. We do not have to remain the dictator or the servant. If we realize there is a power struggle in the relationship, which is generally caused by an extreme power dynamic (i.e. dictator and servant) those in the relationship can choose to change it or simply leave. The choices greatly vary to the type of relationship.

If a person is in a working relationship with a dictator, he/she may choose to leave. Although this individual is not leaving his/her partner, it is still an extremely hard and stressful decision. I have had a few brave individuals throughout my work who decided they were not happy with the treatment they were receiving. They had been courteous long enough. If this is the choice of my client, I generally encourage a well thought out plan. This helps the client follow through with his/her courageous decision.

Often the individual in power is not interested in relinquishing it. And sometimes, the individual, who appears to be the leader, is not really the one holding the most power. As a therapist it is not my job to readjust the power to how I see fit, but according to how the person in the relationship feels it needs to change.

If we choose to change these dynamics, it can often be an uncomfortable but satisfying experience. The client may realize that the "guy" persona, is really a defense mechanism, or that the partner does not want to control, but truly wants to be an equal. Power struggles can take so much out of ourselves and our relationship; but, if there is open communication and a strong desire for that change, anything is possible...

Melissa received her Master of Arts Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Hofstra University, NY, and is an adjunct faculty member at Hunter College, NY, teaching students about Family Systems and Counseling Issues. In addition to providing individual and couple counseling, Melissa leads our Anger Management Group Program.

Call 917-968-5599 to work with Melissa

Helpful Books

Power Struggles

Human BE-ing : How to Have a Creative Relationship Instead of a Power Struggle

by William V. Pietsch

Healing the War Between the Genders: The Power of the Soul-Centered Relationship

by Linda Marks

Create a Healthy Relationship

Getting the Love You Want

by Harville Hendrix

Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples

by Harville Hendrix

The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment

by Gary Chapman

Healing From Trauma

Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma: The Innate Capacity to Transform Overwhelming Experiences

by Peter Levine and Ann Frederick

Healing Trauma: A Pioneering Program for Restoring the Wisdom of Your Body

by Peter A. Levine

Bereavement

I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye: Surviving, Coping and Healing After the Death of a Loved One

by Brook Noel and Pamela D Blair

When There Are No Words: Finding Your Way to Cope With Loss and Grief

by Charlie Walton

...Continued from Page 1

2. Healing From Trauma: A Group Experience for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

This group provides a supportive environment for trauma survivors including domestic violence, severe emotional abuse, assault, combat and other work-related trauma, witness to crime, etc.

Group members can look forward to:

- Share and emotionally work through one's history of trauma
- Better manage overwhelming emotions (i.e. anger, sadness, frustration)
- Feel less alienated
- Gain cognitive skills to process and cope with trauma
- Practice a restorative process of TRUST with others in the group
- Find renewed meaning in life and hope for the future

Both Trauma groups will be led by [J. Brooke Radder, Psy.D.](#)

Brooke, originally from the Midwest, graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Madison, with an honor's degree in Women's Studies and Political Philosophy and later received her doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology from the California Institute of Integral Studies.

Brooke has been trained in a psychodynamic understanding of psychology, and has facilitated several groups addressing trauma, substance abuse, and interpersonal conflict. Brooke finds that it is in our relationships with others where the various conscious and unconscious mental or emotional processes arise in their most fascinating and stubborn patterns; thus, group therapy offers a relational space for the client to explore these dynamics.

For registration, information, or to request a brochure of our trauma groups, please call us at 917-968-5599 or email info@midtowncounseling.com

A STONE WALL

Often things are
Not what they seem.
A feeling can change.
Overnight, it grows
To extreme proportions.
Inside, pain radiates.
A heart is strangled.
It screams desire.
Outwardly, a stone wall
Presents a flawless surface
For all the world to see.
If you could only see
What I feel...

~anonymous

Grieving Throughout the Life Cycle

Written by [Linda Reich, M.A., LMFT](#)

The following article, based upon a book entitled [Bereavement: Counseling the Grieving throughout the Life Cycle](#) by David Crenshaws, is a follow-up to a bereavement presentation given by Linda, entitled "Grief is a Family Affair".

In essence, all people in a family will experience a loss from their perspective depending upon their developmental process, what their previous experience has been pertaining to loss, and how supported and comfortable they feel about the whole situation.

Stated here are the 7 Tasks of mourning. In order to have a healthy resolution of loss, a person must process through these tasks.

1. *Acknowledge the Reality of the Loss:* A person cannot begin the grieving process until there is an acceptance of the reality of the loss.
2. *Identify and Express the Emotions of Grief:* The bereaved must experience the pain
3. *Commemorating the Loss:* Ritual and custom is useful for the grieving process. Planning and participating in the funeral and burial services are helpful steps in honoring the memory of the deceased.
4. *Acknowledge Ambivalence:* Denial of conflicting feelings represents a considerable barrier to the resolution of grief. Usually there is a mixture of intense feelings. In addition to love there might be anger related to a feeling of desertion, or abandonment. This is part of the normal grieving process.
5. *Resolution of the Ambivalence:* Positive and negative feelings are explored and put into perspective.
6. *Letting Go:* Saying good-bye on an emotional level rather than on intellectual level. This can only happen

of grief. The healing process is aided when the feelings are shared. This involves the bereaved taking a risk. Hi/ she is choosing to confide and unburden his/her feelings and trusting that they will be accepted and understood.

after the previous steps have been mastered. The bereaved must withdraw his/her emotional investment in the deceased in order to go forward with his/ her life.

7. *Moving On:* Adoption of a present and future orientation as hopes, dreams, plans and aspirations are restructured and reshaped in view of the new realities. This involves relinquishing the hopes, dreams, plans, and aspirations that revolved around the deceased. There may be resistance to moving on due to anger at life.

As clients who are grieving enter therapy, they are encouraged to tell their stories and share their memories. It is in the sharing that the power of healing can take place. The mourner is permitted to relinquish old dreams in order to make room for new ones. This is not easy. As Crenshaw notes, "To give up long cherished hopes and dreams and then to dare to create new ones is one of the hardest tasks that anyone will undertake."

Linda is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a Clinical Member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy.

Call 917-968-5599 to work with Linda

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Email: info@midtowncounseling.com

web: www.midtowncounseling.com

To receive this online, please send a request to Ellen@midtowncounseling.com

Groups and Workshops

Adult Anger Management Group: Led by Melissa Kester, M.A. in MFT

Creative Healing: An Art Therapy Group for Women

Led by Elena Hull, M.A., LMFT, CAT

Interfaith/ Intercultural Relationships: How to Grow Together as a Couple

Led by Ami Bhalodkar, MPH, Ordained Interfaith Minister

Healing From Trauma—A Group Experience for PTSD

Led by J. Brooke Radder, Psy.D

Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse and Assault Therapy Group

Led by J. Brooke Radder, Psy.D

Adolescent Anger Management Group

Led by Ellen Gregory, M.A., LMFT

Fees:

Group sessions are \$75 per session with an intake fee of \$125.

Psycho-educational series are \$75 per hour

For more information call us at 917-968-5599

Our Counseling Services

Midtown Counseling provides counseling services for individuals, groups, couples, and families.

Additionally, we provide psycho-educational workshops and seminars on a variety of subjects, and we offer group counseling for selective needs.

We focus on providing a warm, welcoming, and attractive environment for our clients. We are a small counseling center, yet we maintain the feel of a private practice.

Each therapist employed by Midtown Counseling maintains an independent practice style, and clients only interact with their assigned therapist.

Call us at **917-968-5599** for more information!

We have no doubt you will feel at home!

We believe that everyone deserves a happy, loving, and fulfilling life, and it is our job to help you achieve yours!