

CONNECTING

Healthy Information from the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center  January/February 2005

Befriending Your Body

It is time for New Year's resolutions and for many those resolutions will reflect some attempt to improve their bodies; perhaps a diet to lose those pounds gained over the holidays or a new exercise program. So many of us are dissatisfied with our bodies. We either judge them harshly or try to ignore them entirely. We are not a culture at home with our bodies. We are obsessed with how our bodies look, how they perform, and how others perceive and judge them. We spend billions of dollars and hours trying to diet, exercise, cosmeticize, and surgically enhance our bodies. We can simultaneously be completely preoccupied with the appearance of our bodies and at the same time completely out of touch with them as well. We often don't have a clue about what is going on inside our bodies or how we really feel beneath the surface of our skin.

If we reflect on what the body actually does, we will be amazed. The body is simply remarkable. Think about the miraculous processes that occur constantly in our bodies: producing growth and energy from the food we eat; healing body tissue and fighting infection; taking in information and processing it through our senses, to name just a few. We tend to take the things our bodies do for granted until we are injured or sick. It would behoove us to get more in touch with how wonderful it is to have a body, no matter what it looks or feels like.

In fact there are very good reasons for getting more fully in touch with our bodies. A part of how we know and make meaning is through the body. Neuroscientists have learned that, on a neurobiological level, emotions, which arise in the body, are integral to such mental processes as cognition, perception, memory, and physical action. Our bodies give us constant information in the form of sensations, emotions and felt sense to help guide us. However, much of this information is tuned out, either because it is so familiar or because it is too uncomfortable.

When painful feelings are blocked out, pleasant ones are as well. Our bodies hold memories of past experiences, especially trauma, so it is understandable that we want to avoid our bodies. However, by disengaging from our bodies to avoid painful emotions, we lose joy, excitement, and other positive states as well. As we learn to stay present with what our body is experiencing, over time, painful emotions and sensations become more tolerable, resulting in more joy and pleasure. We also gain access to more subtle body information we might normally miss.

We tend to think of feelings as coming from the mind. In reality feelings are the constructs that our mind creates when it receives information transmitted to it about sensations and emotions in the

body. Feelings, such as anger, fear, and sadness, are the names we give for specific emotional experiences. Sensations and emotions arise first in the body as is evidenced when they register on the facial muscles or in body tissue before being registered in the brain.

A felt sense refers to those distinctly felt internal body sensations that are connected to a situation, person, or event, either real or imagined. A felt sense encompasses many sensations and communicates them all at once. An example would be the bodily experience we may get when we listen to a favorite piece of music, walk into a hospital, watch a sunset, or hear a baby cry. Sometimes a felt sense is clearly there, but often we have to intentionally focus inward to be aware of it. There are many reasons to develop our ability to notice the felt sense. Noticing our felt senses heightens our enjoyment of sensual experiences, increases our ability to act wisely, provides us deeper access to our intuition, helps us feel more grounded and at home in our bodies, increases our sense of well-being, peace, and connectedness, and can be a doorway to spiritual states of being.

We have been taught to regard our bodies as somehow distinct or separate from our real selves, and we often use and abuse our bodies as if they aren't a sacred part of us. However, body and mind are not separate entities. They are literally one organism and interact fully and mutually via chemical and neural pathways. The body and mind are manifestations of a single organism. While we may be able to separate them for scientific purposes, they are, in effect, inseparable under normal operating circumstances. We can't be fully alive if we are ignoring half of our self. We can't ignore our bodies and be a whole and healthy person.

There is natural wisdom in the body and when we become intentional about tuning into our bodies, we can connect more fully with ourselves and with life. Let me encourage you to begin to regularly notice the nuances of your body, such as your heart rate, breathing, where you carry tension, or what is going on in your body when you feel antsy, restless or fatigued. Notice sensations in your throat, chest, heart, stomach, and lower abdomen. Notice how you hold yourself and what your movements might be telling you. When you are aware of feelings, ask yourself where in your body you are feeling the emotions or sensations and whether they are familiar. Try to describe them to yourself. (You might even try drawing them.) When you tune into the sensations, emotions and felt sense within your body, you are reclaiming both your body and your own life in that moment, and that makes you more real and alive.

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This January I encourage you to make a new resolution regarding your body. Resolve to listen carefully and regularly to the internal "speaking" of your body. Resolve to explore, befriend, and trust your inner felt experience. Resolve to journey into the internal world of your amazing body to discover what it has to tell you. This journey can lead to self-discovery, healing, and greater inner peace.

My belief is in the blood and flesh as being wiser than the intellect. The body-unconscious is where life bubbles up in us. It is how we know that we are alive, alive to the depths of our souls and in touch somewhere with the vivid reaches of the cosmos.
~ D.H. Lawrence

Susan J. Ackelson, M.S.W.

Susan is a licensed independent social worker and the Director of Clinical Services at the Center.

Susan is trained in the use of E.M.D.R. (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), a process for resolving trauma.

Susan's areas of expertise include trauma-related issues and substance abuse issues. Susan has a special interest in utilizing a holistic approach to working with clients.

Resources

Kabat-Zinn, Jon, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* (Dell Publishing, 1990)

Damasio, Antonio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (Harcourt, Inc., 2003)

Levine, Peter A., *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* (North Atlantic Books, 1997)

"The Body in Psychotherapy," *Psychotherapy Networker Journal*, July/August 2004 issue

C.O.O.L. Corner

Children Overcoming the Obstacles of Life

Body awareness and body mastery are primary developmental tasks of early childhood. Sensory perceptions and integration as well as motor organization and planning have profound ramifications for language development, social relationships, emotional regulation, and learning.

- ▶ Provide children with many opportunities to develop gross motor muscles like crawling through and over, climbing up, balancing on.
- ▶ Provide many opportunities to develop fine motor muscles like stringing macaroni, glueing small beads on paper, using straws, pouring water in and out of containers in the sink.
- ▶ Assist with labeling sensory experiences for all senses – movement, touch, smell, sight, and sound.
- ▶ Provide a variety of tactile experiences, such as finger painting, play in a rice/bean/sand container, crafts with fuzzy, scratchy, sticky, furry, rubbery items.
- ▶ Help children match emotion words with bodily sensations.
- ▶ Encourage children to "listen to their bodies" by helping them understand the signals their bodies give.

Effectiveness in Ministry - Fueling the Fire



Dianne Christopher



Diane Mitchell

Date: Friday, February 25, 2005

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Location: Plymouth Congregational Church
New Waveland Hall
4126 Ingersoll Avenue,
Des Moines

Registration fee: \$40, includes lunch

Registration deadline: February 23, 2005

Call or e-mail to register: (515) 274-4006 or
info@dmpcc.org

Calling all ministry professionals. This is a workshop for clergy, chaplains, lay ministers, and caregivers – for anyone involved with growing the life of the church. **Come prepared to review, renew, retool, and refuel for effectiveness in ministry.** If you find yourself resonating with the need for something fresh in ministry - for yourself **or** your congregation - come join us as we pursue a 21st century perspective on ministry effectiveness. Instructors, as well as active ministers, Rev. Dianne Christopher and Rev. Diane Mitchell, have a day planned for you!

Consider through new lenses:

The Foundational Skill Set: Differentiating and Embracing the Me –They – We of Ministry

The Basics in Competence: Communication
Leadership
Administration
Calling
Preaching
Spirituality

Sticking Points: Habits and Patterns
Boundaries
Time Management
Ego Involvement
Difficult People
Spirituality

Self-Care: Support
Spirituality

Rev. Dianne Christopher, M.A., has 35 years of experience within the institutional church and Rev. Diane Mitchell, M.A., has 10 years of experience. Both women are conflict ministry intervention specialists and Intentional Interim Ministry trainers and practitioners.

Educational Events for the Community

The Center is once again sponsoring free community education events this winter/spring 2005 to explore the variety of complementary therapies available in the Des Moines community. The winter/spring series is focusing on A Naturopathic Approach for Wellness. All events take place on the first Tuesday of the month, 5:30 – 6:30 p.m., at Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, 4126 Ingersoll Avenue in Des Moines. The events are free, but please call or e-mail the Center to let us know you will be attending or to obtain further information (274-4006 or info@dmpcc.org).

February 1, 2005

March 1, 2005

April 5, 2005

Homeopathy: The First Choice for Healing

Nutritional Supplements: What's Right for Me?

Digestion, Nutrition, Elimination:

The Path to Wellness

Ned Looney, R.Ph., will be the presenter all three evenings. Ned received his B.S. in Pharmacy from Drake University in 1977. In 1999, Ned opened medihealth solutions, a natural health and wellness center. Go to the website for more description: <http://www.dmpcc.org/life/life.html>

Save this Date! Friday, March 11, 2005

Women Helping Women Annual Luncheon

Speaker: Carmen Lampe Zeitler,
Children and Family Urban Ministries

Topic: *In Our Choices, We Create*

Date: Friday, March 11, 2005

Time: 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Location: Hotel Fort Des Moines, Grand Ballroom
10th and Walnut, Des Moines
Parking available in Allied Insurance parking garage immediately west of the hotel with access through the skywalk.

RSVP: Contact the Center



Access to counseling at critical moments in the lives of women and girls can mean survival. Counseling is a life-changing and empowering process for restoring lives, rebuilding relationships, re-establishing focus for the future, and preventing a spiral into debilitating mental illness and/or destructive behaviors. When women and girls heal and experience their self-worth, they thrive, develop, and take charge of their own futures, and the whole community benefits. Nearly 60% of the Center's clients are female. Since 1999, the Center has sponsored an annual luncheon to raise awareness of these issues and to generate funds to help subsidize our services to low-income women and girls.

DMPCC Rural Satellites in Southern Iowa

Two Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center counselors are now seeing clients in southern Iowa. Lowell Houts, D.Min., and Pete Brantner, M.Div., are establishing psychotherapeutic services in the towns of Mt. Ayr and Lenox. This is an exciting new adventure for the Center and for these counselors.

Lowell is currently seeing clients, by appointment, at the United Baptist/Presbyterian Church, 205 N. Polk St., in Mt. Ayr, on Mondays, day and evening hours available. Pete's office is in Vintage Park Assisted Living, apartment #107, 810 E. Van Buren St., in Lenox. Pete is available to see clients, by appointment, on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, day and evening hours available on all three days. Call the Center for more information or to schedule an appointment (515-274-4006). Both counselors will also continue to see clients in the Des Moines office as well, and participate in all Center professional oversight activities.

Lowell Houts has lived and worked in Central Iowa for 27 years, as a pastor, denominational leader, and pastoral counselor. He and his wife moved to Denver, Missouri, this fall after reconnecting with their rural roots through a project to preserve a century-old frame church building in Worth County, Missouri. Lowell has worked as a pastoral counselor at the Center for the past 16 years, working with individuals and couples. His special interest is in the area of men's issues.

Before his M.Div. degree, Pete Brantner farmed for eight years and worked in agricultural finance for two years. After his ordination, Pete was pastor to three churches in southern Iowa for 13 years. Pete is in his third year as a resident in the Center's training program. He has worked with individuals and couples presenting a wide range of issues during his years as pastor and in his work at the Center. His special area of interest is working with people who have experienced trauma in life.

Emotionally Focused Therapy: An Approach to Couple Therapy

Dates: March 4, 2005 – April 22, 2005
Time: Fridays, 8:30 – 9:45 a.m.
for eight weeks
Location: Des Moines Pastoral
Counseling Center
Cost: \$160 plus text
Registration deadline: February 25, 2005
Instructor: Susan Pierce, M.S., M.S.W.

This eight-week course will apply attachment theory to couple dynamics and illustrate how it can be used to identify and repair relationship difficulties. Dr. Susan Johnson's book, The Practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy, 2nd edition (2004), will be used as a text for the class. Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) is a short-term structured approach, based on attachment theory, that helps a couple learn to create new and more positive emotional experiences in their relationship. Assigned readings from the text, handouts, audiovisual presentations of this approach, and class discussion will provide the content for the course.

Susan Pierce, L.M.H.C., L.I.S.W., has a master's degree in family life ministry and a master's degree in social work. She is a psychotherapist at Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center working with individuals, couples, and families, and has a particular interest in attachment theory.

The Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center is an Iowa Board of Social Work Examiners approved provider #0087 and Iowa Board of Behavioral Science Examiners approved provider #AS98-13. This course is approved for 12 hours of continuing education credit. To register, call (515) 274-4006 or e-mail info@dmpcc.org.

We Welcome Your Feedback!

Please address your comments and suggestions about this newsletter to:

Kathleen Murrin ~ DMPCC ~ 550 39th St., #100 ~
Des Moines, IA 50312 ~ (515) 274-4006 ~
kmurrin@dmpcc.org

Annual Meeting

Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center's Annual Meeting will take place on Thursday, February 3, 2005. The event will be held at the Waveland Golf Course Club House, 6:30 p.m. reception, 7:00 p.m. dinner and meeting. The program will include Carmen Lampe Zeitler speaking on "Wants and Wounds, Whispers and Wild Dreams: Observations on Our Deepest Longings." Carmen is an ordained minister. She has been involved for years with ecumenical and interfaith efforts in Des Moines. For the past eight years, she has been the executive director of Children and Family Urban Ministries. If you are interested in attending, please contact the Center at (515) 274-4006 or info@dmpcc.org.

Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center Foundation

Leaving a legacy is more than passing money to the next generation. It is also an opportunity to send a message, a message that reflects your values and continues your commitments. If you or someone you know has benefited from or been comforted by the services of the Center's fine staff, won't you consider a gift that will make that same benefit and comfort available to those who come after you? We encourage you to consider a planned gift to the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center Foundation. Contact Kathleen Murrin at the Center for further information.

www.dmpcc.org

Visit the Center's website for more information on the Center's counseling services and staff, special events and classes.

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is a publication of the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center, an independent, interfaith, not-for-profit organization. For over 30 years, the Center has been providing counseling and educational services to adults, families, adolescents, and children for the purpose of enhancing emotional, spiritual, and relationship health. The Center has satellite offices in West Des Moines, Altoona, Ankeny, and Urbandale.
Editor: Kathleen Murrin

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