



ELKANAH COUNSELLING

www.elkanahcounselling.com.au

Festive Season 2011

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Reception Hours:
10.00 am – 4.00 pm
Monday – Friday

Consultation Hours:
8.00 am – 8.00 pm
Monday – Friday

8.00 am – 12.00 pm
Saturday

Consultations by
appointment only.

After hours: Elkanah
does not operate a
locum service. If you
need crisis assistance
Lifeline can be
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Here we are at the end of yet another year. There have been some important changes from the Government in regard to access to psychologists. Kerryl has emphasized these changes clearly in this newsletter.

Of course, our role as psychologists and family therapists is to help clients make changes that will enhance their lives. We work with the client to achieve their goals.

We often get stuck with perceptions and ways of behaving that we have learnt in our early years. When things are not working for us, whether as individuals, couples or families, it is necessary to take a new approach. First we need to understand where our unhelpful thinking has come from. We also need to understand why our partner or family members may be thinking quite differently from us. We all tend to act automatically, especially when under stress and often this is based in our outmoded learned thinking or behaviour.

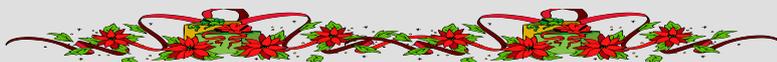
Eddy's article looks at differences between men and women. Of course, genetic temperament and the environment we grew up in, all contribute to these differences as well.

Often at Christmas, unresolved family issues create friction and unhappiness. Better to deal with our differences and get counselling where necessary.

Lyn Shand
– Psychologist & Family Therapist

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WHY WOMEN AND MEN OFTEN ARE IN CONFLICT WITH EACH OTHER

Eddy Kleynhans

Have you often wondered why women and men are behaving differently in relationships? One school of thought would suggest that it has to do with the way we are reared and educated. Another school of thought would suggest that interpersonal conflicts amongst the sexes have to do with the way they are hard wired.

The school of thought that I will discuss in this article will be the latter, i.e. our interpersonal conflicts can be explained by the fact that men and women are hardwired differently. In particular, I will focus on the role of hormones in the interpersonal conflicts between men and women.

According to Psychologist, John Gray of the “Men are from Mars and Women from Venus” fame wrote in his latest book that men and women are biologically different because they are hardwired differently. Because of our everyday stressful life styles men and women are too busy and tired to appreciate the differences amongst the sexes. Hence, if one can establish what the biological differences are and what causes stress which facilitate the inter-sexes conflicts, we can look at strategies as to how to relax both men and women. That is, how to reduce the stress and interpersonal conflicts.

Effective communication can assist couples to have better relationships. However, because of everyday stresses men and women have an additional burden in communicating with each other. Hence, according to John Gray, men (Mars) and women (Venus) collide. That is, men and women respond differently to stress. According to Gray, men and women not only respond to stress in unique ways, but it also mattered how they are supported uniquely in managing the stress and conflicts better. So there must be effective strategies to create happy and healthy relationships as ways of reducing stress amongst the sexes.

The first issue to become aware of is the natural differences of men and women. So if we know the differences we can change the behaviours amongst the sexes and in so doing reduce the interpersonal tension. Having said that, one has to realise that social roles of men and women had changed over the years which is making Mars-Venus scenario more complicated.

The first step would be to become aware of the sexes differences talked about here and the second step is to take action to adjust behaviours which will reduce the interpersonal tension.

That is, it involves an awareness of these differences first and then to take steps to reduce our own stress and assist our partners to lower theirs.

HOW MEN AND WOMEN ARE DIFFERENTLY WIRED

According to Gray men and women differ as follows:

- If a man forgets a woman's need or a woman remembers his mistakes, it does not mean they don't love each other.
- Instead of seeing our different stress reactions as a problem, we need to recognise that our attempts to change our partners are most often the real problem.
- A woman's greatest challenge is to begin caring for herself as much as she is caring for others.
- A man's brain is single focussed, while a woman's brain tends to multitask.
- Leaving a man alone and ignoring him is sometimes the best way to support him.
- While women tend to reach out to take in more information, under stress men tend to focus on determining the most important thing to do. That is men tend to go quickly to solution mode whereas women do not necessarily have to.
- When men have little to say, women often take it personally, as if he does not want to share.
- When women talk, a man is acutely aware of the time she is taking and feels an inner urgency to help her solve her problems quicker.
- Looking at women is a healthy instinct in men.
- The amygdala which in part determines our reactions to stress and danger, is directly wired to the visual and take-action part of the man's brain.
- Emotions enhance a woman's memory.
- A woman's enormous capacity for joy, delight, and fulfilment is the fuel that lets a man know that he makes a difference.

WHAT ABOUT THE HORMONES AND THEIR EFFECTS?

- Adult males produce 20 to 30 times more testosterone than do women.
- Success or the anticipation of success in a relationship fuels the rise of a man's testosterone and sustains his interest in her. That is men always want to be well spoken of.
- Depressed men have low testosterone levels.
- Shifting from one problem to an easier problem to solve can help rebuild a man's testosterone levels.
- When a man's workday is over, a switch turns off in his brain and he shifts to a passive, relaxed mode.
- Oxytocin, the feel-good hormone, is the love and bonding hormone. This hormone is high after women had given birth.
- Oxytocin decreases when a woman feels alone, ignored, unsupported, or that she does not matter.
- Trust and the anticipation of getting needs met is a potent oxytocin producer.

Women's bodies (when at home) will produce oxytocin when she feels free to nurture herself or others. Moreover women increase their oxytocin levels when they feel seen, heard and supported.

Other things that increase oxytocin in women are: sharing, safety, beauty, trust, teamwork, caring, compliments, consistency, collaboration, routine and regularity. Hence, for all you men out there, take note of the aforementioned if you want affection and cooperation from women!

It is common for women to have their oxytocin diminished by testosterone because of stressful workplaces. That is, at work women have a higher testosterone level which increases their stress. It is for that reason that they need support and listened to by their men when they get home. This will increase their oxytocin levels. In contrast to this, a man starts to relax when his job is done when he gets home.

Unconditional giving increases oxytocin levels within women. However, giving with the condition of receiving increases testosterone in men and women. Moreover, it appears that the woman's job is not done when she gets home which is why men should support them when they arrive home at the end of the day. Modern men and women have a dilemma in that men arrive stressed and tired and women expect support from their men. This result in both not having enough to give each other.

One way of increasing a stressed woman's oxytocin is for her husband/partner to hug her when arriving home in the evening or listen to what she has to say about her day for a few minutes. In turn she will be considerate to his needs and not be too demanding so that he could have his down time thereafter (for both a win-win). When a woman completes a hard day at work that requires more testosterone than usual, she needs her oxytocin levels to emerge when she gets home. Hence, it is the quality of her relationship with her partner/husband that is of the essence when it comes to her stress management.

It is a known fact that when we are stressed, our stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline are at a higher level and could have *some nasty physical effects such as headaches, irritable bowel syndrome, hypertension, chronic fatigue, depression and allergies.*

When women are stressed, they tend not to withdraw, but to seek social contact, especially with other women or nurture children. These activities enhance their oxytocin levels. It is their way of coping with stress. Men in contrast tend to go into isolation or in their cave as it were. It is important to note that testosterone does not lower a woman's stress like oxytocin does.

If she does not want to become dependent on her partner/husband for her oxytocin raising, a woman needs to integrate into her daily programme a support system of work, friends and other family members.

There are some men who are perhaps not aware of the fact that by talking and sharing, a woman can increase her oxytocin levels.

Stress and Sex. In contrast to men, most women are not interested in sex when stressed. Moreover, having sex produces testosterone in men, and orgasm produces oxytocin. Did you know that the reactions of men and women are different after sexual intercourse: the increased oxytocin releases the cuddle reflex for women whereas men withdraw after orgasm and return to normal hormonal levels. The latter can cause women to feel rejected as they feel most connected after sex. Consequently, it is important for both stakeholders to understand and be sensitive to the difference described in this section. It would therefore be important for men and woman to be creative when it comes to novel ways of raising oxytocin in women.

Is it not true that we all want to enjoy life and feel happy? It would appear that our hormones are making all the difference.

I can keep on talking about the differences between men and women. But I will keep you curious until the next article in our next newsletter.

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MEDICARE AND PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES AT ELKANAH: BETTER ACCESS PROGRAM UPDATE

Kerryl Beissel

Since my previous article on “Medicare and Psychology Services at Elkanah” (Elkanah Counselling Newsletter, Winter 2010) there have been changes to the Better Access program, and we have also received clarification on some Medicare requirements for Better Access.

NUMBER OF SESSIONS PER CALENDAR YEAR

One of the most significant changes is in the number of sessions with a psychologist which an individual may access in a year. **From 1st November 2011, the maximum is now 10 sessions.** This replaces the previous limit of 12 per calendar year, and there is no particular provision for “exceptional circumstances” (previously 6 additional sessions i.e. up to 18).

The maximum number of sessions in the first “course of treatment” or set of sessions is 6. After that, the psychologist writes a report, including outcomes and recommendations to the GP who may conduct a review with the client. The GP may refer the client for another course of treatment, keeping within the maximum total of 10 in the year. So if 6 sessions have been completed in the year, the maximum in the second set is 4.

Clients who attended at least 10 sessions with Medicare rebates during 2011 could not access further sessions beyond the maximum of 10, after 1st November. However it is our understanding that from 1st January 2012 (new calendar year), individuals who accessed 10 sessions in 2011 can be eligible for further sessions with rebates (dependent on their GP’s assessment, opinion, and referral for further sessions).

REFERRAL FROM GP TO PSYCHOLOGIST

We have now received clear advice that the psychologist must receive a specific referral from the GP, such as a letter, in order to provide services which can be claimed through Medicare. While clients must have a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan (GPMHTP) in place, a copy of the Plan does not in itself constitute a referral for Medicare purposes. We also require a referral letter/note provided by the GP when a review is conducted and a client is referred for a further set of sessions (not only a copy of the GPMHTP Review) .

The referral letter needs to include full details of the GP, including contact details and Medicare Provider Number, and be signed by the GP and dated. It may outline the client's details, history and reason(s) for the referral. The referral should ideally specify the number of sessions for which the GP is referring the client (maximum of 6 for a referral, and may be fewer), and indicate that there is a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan in place.

It is helpful if the referral names the psychologist (but not essential – can be addressed generally e.g. “Dear Psychologist”). The referral can be brought by the client to the first session or sent (or faxed, etc) to the psychologist prior to the first session. Please note that without a valid referral as above on or prior to the first session, or the first of a subsequent set sessions, we will not be able to provide an account which can be claimed through Medicare.

We find it is helpful (though not required by Medicare) for the psychologist to receive a copy of the GPMHTP (Plan) along with the referral, as (1) it confirms that the Plan is in place and (2) the psychologist can then know and understand the content of the Plan e.g. the GP's assessment, diagnosis and goals discussed by the GP with the client. This in turn can facilitate a coordinated approach in the interests of the client.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A GP MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT PLAN AND A REFERRAL TO A PSYCHOLOGIST AT ELKANAH

Please contact Elkanah reception on 9817 5654 to arrange an appointment. Our receptionists can provide information about fees and current Medicare rebates, and other information you may need. Please bring the referral with you when you attend (unless you know that the GP has sent it directly to us) and a copy of the GP Mental Health Treatment Plan if you have it.

We welcome enquiries from GPs, whether for general information about our services or regarding a particular referral. GPs and potential clients may wish to read more about our psychologists and our services on our web site, www.elkanahcounselling.com.au. Alternatively you can call Elkanah reception on 9817 5654 and request that a brochure(s) be sent.

FURTHER INFORMATION

This article is not designed to be a complete description of the Better Access Program but rather to provide some updates and clarification from the perspective and current understanding of the psychologists at Elkanah. Individuals are advised to seek their own clarification or confirmation of any particular details, for example by contacting Medicare. For further details please also see the following:

Australian Psychological Society (APS): www.psychology.org.au
Department of Health and Ageing: www.health.gov.au

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

With all the stress and hustle and bustle at this time of the year, it is good to share with friends and family !!

Merry Christmas everyone.

Cherish quiet moments when you can get them and enjoy the beauty of Christmas.

Best Wishes for the New Year from us all at Elkanah.

Lyn Shand



ELKANAH NEWSLETTER

Feedback & Change of Details

We appreciate any information and feedback that can help us in providing our newsletter and other services to you. Please complete the following if:

- You wish to advise us of a change in your mailing details
- You have feedback or suggestions for the newsletter
- You would like copies of our brochure

Please complete your details as currently listed

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Are the above changes for: Address Change Replacement Contact Additional Contact

If you wish to be taken off the Elkanah newsletter mailing list please tick

BROCHURE REQUESTS - Number required:

Each newsletter contains articles written by members of our team of psychologists. Let us know of any of topics that you would particularly like to know more about, anonymously if you wish. Most of our psychologists are also available to present talks and seminars. Please contact reception on 9817 5654 for enquiries.

Comments:

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO: ELKANAH COUNSELLING, 1 WHITEHORSE ROAD BALWYN 3103