



ELKANAH COUNSELLING

www.elkanahcounselling.com.au

Winter 2015

1 Whitehorse Road
Balwyn VIC 3103

Phone: 9817 5654
Fax: 9817 5654

Reception staff:
Helen Waterworth
Robyn Everest

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 contacted on 131114.

In this edition of the newsletter, our focus is on different facets of happiness. We thought this was quite topical given that winter is a time when the world can seem to be a little bit gloomier.

May has written about the changes that come with a new baby. Although this is a very happy time, it is all too often also a very stressful time. It is very easy for new mums to prioritise themselves last or to try and do what they were doing before, but now with a baby. May has some very useful suggestions on this. And given that she has recently had a baby herself, May is speaking with the wisdom of experience.

John addresses some of the “shoulds” that we have about happiness. That we should be happy in this day and age, and if we are not, something is wrong. As John points out, we have fallen for an expectation of continued happiness. Of course many businesses profit from this by trying to sell us commodities to literally buy short term happiness, so there is constant subtle advertising telling us that we can be happy if we buy that product. Instead, John addresses the thoughts, emotions and reality around these expectations.

Lastly Melanie has written about a stress reduction technique that is currently growing in popularity – colouring for adults. At a time of year when we would prefer to rug up and stay inside it sounds like a very pleasant thing to do!

Lyn Shand, Psychologist & Family Therapist

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- | | | |
|---|--|---------------|
| 3 | Postnatal Health & Wellbeing | May Wong |
| 4 | Busting the “I always have to be happy” myth | John Andersen |
| 6 | Colouring for Adults | Melanie Birch |

Our Psychologists



JOHN ANDERSEN

BA, DipPsych., MA., MSc,
Member VAFT

After completing graduate studies in the United States, John worked as a police counsellor with the Police in Los Angeles, followed by work as a marriage and family therapist in a Christian counselling centre. John specialises in relationship counselling including: marital, stepfamily/blended family issues, and working with adolescents within the context of their families.



MELANIE BIRCH

BA BBSoc. (Hons), CertPastPsych, AdvCertTrauma,
DipClinHyp MAPS,
Member, APS College of Counselling Psychologists

Melanie worked in the field of organisational development before training as a psychologist and trauma therapist. She has now practised in this area for 15+ years. The principle focus of her work is the treatment of trauma, grief, anxiety, depression and PND. She works both with people who have long standing issues and those with more recent difficulties. Melanie is also a trained hypnotherapist.



ROBERT POSTLETHWAITE

BBSoc MPsych. MAPS
Member APS College of Clinical Psychologists

Rob's long term interest in chronic pain and illness has resulted in considerable experience in the treatment of depression, anxiety and anger problems that are some of the emotional consequences of these conditions. Rob's underlying philosophy is to focus on the here and now and address the current issues in a pragmatic and problem solving manner.



SYLVIA WERBA

BEd (Psych) MAPS
Member APS College of Counselling
Psychologists & CED Psychologists

Sylvia has been a registered psychologist for over 25 years, both within the school system as well as in private practice – working with children, adolescents, adults and families. Sylvia uses an eclectic approach to work through life's complications, review goals and formulate a more optimistic and positive approach to the future. Sylvia also has experience in Psychometric assessment to help students achieve at their potential in the best possible way – including those with special needs.



KERRYL BEISSEL

BSc (Hons – Psych), MAPS
Member, APS College of Counselling Psychologists

Kerryl has experience in counselling for a wide range of personal and relationship issues. Her areas of work include management and treatment of anxiety, stress and depression; and assistance in dealing with the effects of difficult or traumatic past experiences. Kerryl has expertise in assisting people through times of transition or crisis, whether it be in their personal lives, in their workplace or ministry.



EDDY KLEYNHANS

MA., MAPS
Member APS College of Health Psychologists

Eddy has been a registered psychologist for 25 years. He has also been registered with the Dutch Psychological Society, Dutch being his second language. In Australia, he has been providing Employee Assistance Programs to organisations, often travelling interstate to consult with clients. He is an ex-president of EAPA. His expertise in private practice includes working with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds.



LYN SHAND

BA DipEd GradDipPsych MAPS
Member VAFT & APS Colleges of Counselling
Psychologists and CED Psychologists

Lyn has much experience working with clients who suffer from stress, anxiety & depression. As a family therapist and psychologist, much of her evening work is with couples, family relationship issues and also separation as she is a trained mediator. She has considerable expertise and experience in working with women with P.M.S., postnatal depression and anxiety and problems at menopause, having written a book on this topic. Lyn is the owner of Elkanah.



MAY WONG

BSc/BE (Hons), PG Dip Psych (Hons), MA Psych
(Health), MAPS
Member APS College of Health Psychologists

May is a health psychologist who works with chronic health issues such as diabetes, cardiac & pulmonary issues, rehab following surgery, cancer and pain. May was born in Hong Kong and grew up in Australia. She is also a member of the Hong Kong Psychological Society and in addition to English speaks fluent Cantonese and some Mandarin. As a health psychologist May focuses on the relationship between mental and physical wellbeing.

POSTNATAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

May Wong

Having a baby is a major event in your life. Your whole world is turned upside down, your priorities change, your habits change, and your perspective changes. It can be an enormous challenge to adjust to these changes all at once.

Physical changes

For the new mum, your body had undergone phenomenal change in the past months, and unlike celebrities we see on TV and in magazines, it can take a while to return to your pre-pregnancy weight and shape notwithstanding the process of the birth itself. Remember it took nine months to acquire this new shape, so it should take some time to shift from this shape too.

Sleep

Sleep for the baby and parents can become something of an obsession for most new families. The internet and book shelves are filled with information and advice on how to “fix” a baby’s sleep patterns. The truth is, babies have their own ideas about their sleep, especially in the beginning, and most attempts to change their patterns are temporary or ineffective. You could spend weeks stressing about things like getting the baby to sleep at the right time, in the right place, and for the right amount of time. In doing so, you may be losing out on the sleep you need to provide the best care for your baby.

When you don’t sleep well, you can become grumpy, emotional, clumsy, forgetful, and hungry. For new mums, lack of sleep can also affect your milk supply. So instead of trying to squeeze in a little housework when your baby is napping, you could do with a rest too. And instead of trying to get your baby to sleep at certain times in a certain way, you might want to work with your baby’s sleep patterns so you can all get some much needed rest.

Diet and exercise changes

When time is at a premium, you might be tempted to take shortcuts wherever you can, and the easiest shortcut to take is with food. It is so much easier to get fast food or takeaway to fill your stomach, and snack on junk food instead of thinking about cooking. Try to eat smarter, and take good shortcuts instead of resorting to nutrition-poor food. You’ll feel better when you eat better, and your baby will be getting better nutrition as well!

Getting some exercise may be the last thing you’re thinking about, but it can be a great mood lifter. Just taking your baby for a short walk each day may provide both physical and mental benefits. And your baby might enjoy it too.

Psychological changes

New mums undergo dramatic hormonal changes throughout pregnancy and beyond, and this can play havoc on your emotions. Postnatal depression is gaining recognition as a serious problem that around one in seven women experience. It can greatly interfere with your ability to function and care for your baby. Even if you don't have postnatal depression, there is a good chance you will be overwhelmed and stressed at times. Be sure to ask for help when you need it.

Relationship changes

Your relationship will inevitably undergo big changes as well. There are going to be things you don't agree on, especially when tension is already running high with sleep deprivation. Remember that you're ultimately on the same team! Instead of taking it out on your partner, try to share your frustrations so you can deal with things together. Make use of all the support you have access to, including grandparents, friends, mothers groups, playgroups, babysitters, house cleaners, online forums, and whatever else you find helpful.

Looking after a baby is hard work, so cut yourself some slack. Eat well, sleep when you can, take breaks, and be kind to yourself.

© 2015

Busting the “I always have to be happy!” myth.

John Andersen

Have you noticed how often we feel that, “If I am not happy, something is wrong”? I mean, after all, we have never been so well off. We live in an era of affluence, comfort, prosperity and plenty that is unparalleled in human history. Yet, our age is known as the age of anxiety. And we are hearing more and more of the increasing extent of violence, depression, stress and anxiety. Something does not compute....

While this suggests that there are hidden costs to the prosperity we are pursuing and enjoying, in terms of higher expectations, and the stress of relentless work demands and financial pressures, there is another subtle factor. As prosperous Westerners, we have fallen for the expectation that we should be happy all the time, and that if we are not, something is wrong.

Consequently, sadness, flatness, weariness, anxiety, and other negative emotions no longer are acceptable. They do not rightfully belong, and should be gotten rid of, or removed. “I should not feel that way...” Consequently, when we have negative feelings, we do not tolerate them or allow them to be; rather, we try to distract ourselves from them, suppress them, avoid them, or argue ourselves out of them using popular psychological tricks and strategies. One of the common misperceptions that we fall into that make negative thoughts and feelings more terrifying than they really are is that we take them for reality. We lose sight of the fact that thoughts are only thoughts; feelings are only feelings. To use an analogy, when we see a TV report of an event, what we are seeing is only an account. We are not experiencing the event

itself. You may recall the movie *Inception*. The peril in the movie that Dominic Cobb (played by Leonardo DiCaprio) faced was no longer being able to distinguish between dream and reality. And as a result, he could become trapped in the dream.

Likewise, we face the peril of confusing our thoughts for reality. As a result, we become trapped by our thoughts. A common example is the negative thought “I am a failure.” The fact that I have a thought “I am a failure” does not establish the fact of me being a failure. Yet, we frequently take such negative thoughts as reality. So we conclude that we are “no good”, “not good enough” “hopeless”, “depressed”, and so forth. What makes these common negative thoughts so distressing is we frequently mistake them for reality, that the occurrence of the thought itself makes it real.

We have lost sight of the fact that a thought is only a thought. A thought is not an event, any more than a story or a report is an event. Events are caused by actions. Only events are reality. Thoughts do not create events, so thoughts are not real, no matter how intense or compelling they are.

To appreciate the difference this perspective makes, try making this comparison the next time you are distressed with a negative thought. Rather than, “I am a failure,” try thinking, “I am having a thought that ‘I am a failure.’” A thought is only a thought. So thoughts are not things to be afraid of or distressed by.

Thoughts are part of the stream of my awareness. They can be perceptions, deceptions, reflections, imaginations, considerations. Thoughts have all sorts of different functions. Thoughts vary immensely in their truth and accuracy. Because a thought is emotive or vivid does not make it real. It only makes it emotive and vivid. This means that we can allow our thoughts to simply be, and be an aspect of our awareness that we can interact with, rather than be defined by.

So then, how do I regard the range of emotions that I experience. A useful analogy is to compare our emotions to the weather. Weather changes. Indeed, we need weather to change. We need a balance of sunshine and rain, wind and stillness, warm days and cool ones. Our emotions are like the weather in our internal world. Like weather, they come and go. Like weather, we have good days and blue days, days we feel terrific, and other days we just have to plod through. An emotionally resilient person has learnt to tolerate the range of his or her emotional states, just like we have learnt to accept and tolerate the weather. There is no point complaining that it should never rain. Rather, we simply dress for the rain and get on with it. So it is when we have negative emotions, we “stay calm and carry on”. Happiness is like sunshine. We enjoy it, but do not expect that we should feel that way all the time. Like other emotional states, it comes and goes.

And remember Ecclesiastes 7:14

In the day of prosperity be happy,
But in the day of adversity consider –
God has the one as well as the other.

© 2015

COLOURING FOR ADULTS

Melanie Birch

There is a new sensation on the block: colouring for adults. While it's been in existence for several decades, in the last few years its popularity has exploded and shows no signs of slowing for some time. The beginning of that explosion was Johanna Basford, a commercial illustrator who was asked by her publishers to draw black and white patterns for a children's colouring book. Basford knew that the intricate patterns she created for things like wine labels were already popular for adults to colour. So instead she created "Secret Garden: An Inky Treasure Hunt and Coloring Book" and her publishers were convinced to print it.

To date, it has sold more than two million copies, and spawned an industry. Both this book and its follow-up "Enchanted Forest: An Inky Quest & Coloring Book" are in Amazon's top ten seller list for 2015. And there are several more by different authors within the top 100 list.

Whether they are a meditation or mindfulness activity is up for debate. There are certainly qualities of these present and there are several books with titles such as "Colour Yourself Calm: A Mindfulness Colouring Book". There are also a growing number of people who advocate the health benefits colouring mandalas as a meditation activity.

Meditation is an old practice, intended as an aide to develop areas such as spiritual understanding, inner awareness and the direct experience of ultimate reality. Rather than focussing on external demands, there was often an intense focus on a single sound, a thought, a point of vision or a word. The eyes were commonly closed and the practice undertaken for a period of time each day. Formal mindfulness meditation requires a focus on the sensations and movement of the breath, with eyes closed. Less formal mindfulness is about the quality of awareness that is brought to each moment. Wandering thoughts and distractions are noted without judgement or resistance. The goal of both is to be more aware of what is happening in your own body and mind at the time it is happening.

Whether colouring fits these descriptions or not, it is a wonderful method of relaxation and time out. It unhitches us from the busyness of activity and – importantly in this day and age – it provides a disconnect from digital devices. For the many of us who are "not good" at painting it is a way of using that part of the brain without worrying about what to draw or how to draw it. Instead, the structure is there and the choice is about colours. It is about creating a picture without words, not using words to create a picture.

Remember as a child, often the colouring activity was also as much about trying to keep the colour inside the lines as create the picture. Well this is a lot the same, except that the designs are often much more intricate and those lines are a lot more difficult to colour inside. Which means you will find also it difficult to multi task and not forget which colour you had decided to use in which area. So this is an activity that requires concentration. And if quiet music or silence is in the background, it becomes an absorbing and very relaxing activity. It will usually slow breathing and heart rate to a more regular level than we tend to have trying to attend to three things at once. And because we are absorbed in a pleasant

activity, our muscles tend to relax. Or alternatively, we become aware of where we have been holding tension in our muscles and can then do something about attending to that with stretching, massage, hot packs or whatever it may be. The upshot is an unexpectedly more relaxed body.

Intricate colouring can also become a metaphor for some aspects of life. It is impossible to colour accurately and retain the whole picture simultaneously. That becomes a good reminder to step back now and then and contemplate the whole of our lives, rather than focussing minute to minute on the seemingly important. The opposite is also true. If we spend all our time looking at the whole of what has come before or only the white space of the future, we are not attending to the present with enough concentration.

As you colour your pattern, notice how your perspective and assessment of one colour and its relationship to the whole changes as you complete another section or colour. Just like life, we can change our perspectives on matters as more information is added. Note too that the seemingly insignificant colour added early on can take on a much stronger role when the pattern is completed, in the same way that a trifling decision made early in life can be seen quite differently decades later.

Likewise, no colour stands on its own. All are seen in relation to each other. The subtle shading from one to another, the discord or unexpected harmony of two seemingly clashing colours. Again, another lesson in life, its surprises and the insights that are made by standing back and seeing another perspective.

I am sure you will make your own discoveries, and I would love to hear them. This is a process that is quite individual to each person. And collectively there is a great deal of enjoyment and pleasure being experienced in colouring by a great many adults. (And just between you and me, there is also pleasure in having a reason to buy that pencil set you always wanted as a child!).

This activity can be a costly or as inexpensive as you like. There are no rules about what to colour with: pens, pencils, crayons, textas, paints, the choice is yours. And I said at the beginning, there are many books of intricate drawings available online and in your local art and craft shop. A very popular and beautiful series is Millie Marotta's Animal Kingdom. There are also books that have instructions for designing your own line drawings for colouring. The Art of Zentangle is one such.

And then are also hundreds of free line drawings available to download and print. The next page has a sample, a fairly intricate mandala. It will take quite some time to do, don't expect to finish in one sitting! Put aside a little time when you can, become absorbed, relax and enjoy!

© 2015



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

NAME:

POSITION/DEPARTMENT:

ORGANISATION:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

TELEPHONE:

New contact details:

NAME:

POSITION/DEPARTMENT:

ORGANISATION:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

TELEPHONE:

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