



ELKANAH COUNSELLING

www.elkanahcounselling.com.au

Issue Number Three 2016

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.

This edition of our newsletter looks at some very important aspects of what I would call dealing with The Stress Triangle. The three areas of this triangle include physiological stresses, psychological and relationship stresses and work/leisure stresses.

Rob has suggested one of the reliable ways to overcome both psychological & relationship issues, such as anxiety and depression is exercise. It also helps social contact if you exercise with a group. Exercise is also excellent for our physiological health and gives us a balance from work commitments. Choose the type of exercise that you enjoy.

Melanie also emphasises how good sleep habits influence us in a positive way to combat obesity, depression and anxiety. We also need to balance working on computers and blue light by switching them off at a reasonable time at night. So many people feel they need to interact with their smartphone for work at all hours. Relationships can also be adversely affected if we don't get enough sleep. Again all three aspects of the stress triangle can be helped with good sleep habits.

John explores how most of us are good people. However, many of our clients concentrate on their lack of self-worth, concentrating on their weaknesses rather than their strengths. Others wear a mask, pretending to be someone other than themselves. Being our true self reduces anxiety, improves relationships, and helps us to feel secure. It also allows us to be assertive at home and in the work place and it keeps us physically healthy rather than relying on quick fixes such as alcohol, smoking and a poor diet – none of which improves our self-worth. Counselling helps people to realise their potential as good people and so can help in all aspects of the Stress Triangle issues.

Lyn Shand, Psychologist & Family Therapist

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- | | | |
|---|--|-------------------|
| 3 | Exercise | Rob Postlethwaite |
| 4 | Being a Good Person ... Honestly | John Andersen |
| 5 | Sleep, Chief Nourisher in Life's Feast | 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.



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, or in their work or ministry.



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 18 years. The principle focus of her work is the treatment of trauma, grief, anxiety, panic attacks and PND. She works both with people who have long standing issues and those with more recent difficulties. Melanie is also a trained hypnotherapist.



EDDY KLEYNHANS

MA., MAPS, Member APS College of Health Psychologists

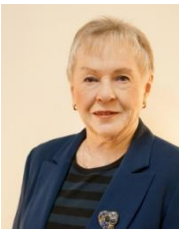
Eddy has been a registered psychologist for 25 years. He has also been registered with the Dutch Psychological Society, Dutch being his second language. In Australia, he has been providing Employee Assistance Programs to organisations, often travelling interstate to consult with clients. He is an ex-president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



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.



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.



SYLVIA WERBA

BEd (Psych) MAPS, Member APS College of Counselling Psychologists and College of Educational & Developmental Psychologists

Sylvia has over 30 years experience as a Psychologist. She works with adults and adolescents, and is passionate about assisting individuals to reach their potential and overcome current or past traumas and experiences. Sylvia has an interest in family issues, self-esteem, social skills, anxiety, depression and solution focussed counselling. She uses an empathetic and eclectic approach, and strongly believes in the importance of a positive client-therapist relationship.

Exercise

Rob Postlethwaite

As technology has advanced we have progressively made our lives physically easier. As a consequence the need to make an effort to focus on exercise has become a more important aspect of our lifestyle. The medical profession, including both the research scientists and our health practitioners, have stressed the importance of exercise/physical activity to avoid or manage a wide range of physical conditions but taking care of our physical health also plays a significant role in looking after our mental health. Aerobic exercise including walking, running, swimming, riding, gym and many team sports can play a major role in stress/anxiety reduction and avoiding or managing depression.

Quite frequently we resort to a glass of wine or comfort food to cope when we feel anxious or depressed which is certainly easier and may feel better but does not leave us feeling better about ourselves or add to the quality of our lives. The involvement in a regular exercise programme however generates a sense of wellbeing and assists with self esteem and self confidence. It promotes the production of the opiate substances in the brain (endorphins) which improve our ability to cope with the stresses of life and improves our resilience when things go badly as they do for all of us from time to time. In addition recent research indicates that exercise plays a significant role in our cognitive functioning including concentration and memory but also the regeneration of nerve cells in the brain.

While most of us are aware in some way of the importance of exercise, finding the motivation to follow through eludes many people. The issue of motivation is something that we have limited understanding of and at this point it is based on the intellectual rationale for why it is better for us to exercise or give up smoking, manage our diet/weight or reduce our alcohol consumption. Making the commitment and maintaining it in the long term requires persistence and the ability to regularly win the argument in our heads about whether or not to pull on our runners and get out there.

An exercise routine also requires a commitment rather than a regimented routine that doesn't allow flexibility in our lives. Life is constantly changing and few of us can lock into an exercise regime that doesn't adapt to the circumstances. The persistence required may mean going through a period of awkwardness while you get to know the routine at the local pool or gym, when is the best time to go, how to use the machines, feeling comfortable in bathers or gym gear etc. It is also important to exercise in a manner that you can maintain over a long period. Three to four days per week is certainly sufficient to look after your health and mental health.

For many of us the motivation to maintain an exercise routine is based in the social aspect of it. Involving ourselves in group or team activities is often a pleasant and effective way of maintaining an exercise programme in the long term and can often add to our social network. As we become older there is a risk of progressively becoming isolated and involving ourselves with others in exercise is good for us physically and psychologically. Alternatively much of the focus in recent years has been on making life harder again by walking up the stairs or getting out of our chairs to walk to the next office rather than send an email/text to our co-workers. That too can add to our involvement is social activity and quality of life.

© 2016

Being a Good Person.... Honestly

John Andersen

Most of us are pretty good people. This is reflected in the recognition by the police that they do not need to concern themselves with 95% of the community; we are generally good law-abiding citizens. It is only a small portion of the community that come to the attention of the police, and they focus on monitoring that small minority of offenders.

Have you ever wondered why it is so important and satisfying for us that in stories and movies, the good guys must always win? We have a strong cultural myth that Good will triumph in the end. Stories where the good guys triumph are deeply satisfying. There is something deep inside us that really wants to believe that Good will triumph, and that readily identifies with the Good side. Most of us want to be regarded as a good person. Most of us put a special effort in to appearing to be a good person to others, and we tend to hide and be ashamed of the bad things we do. We do not want others to regard us as a bad person.

At some deep level we all recognise that we are true to who we REALLY are when we are being a good person, rather than when we are a bad person. There is something really satisfying in being a good person, and being a bad person simply does not crack it.

And there is a similar thing with being worthwhile, or having worth. Self-worth is really important to us. If I feel that I have no worth, or that I am worthless as a person, that is a deeply painful conclusion. And I simply cannot make my peace with it. There always remains a point of protest that I can't accept being worthless. No way!

People work so hard to build a sense of worth. They pursue competence and achievement in whatever field of endeavour they tackle. It may be academic study, sport, climbing the corporate ladder, acquiring the social status symbols of success of money, house and trophy partner. And the more their sense of self-worth is at stake, the more distressed they will become at the prospect of failure, and the harder they will push themselves to succeed. What does this tell us?

I am yet to meet a person who was really happy and comfortable being worthless. No person has yet told me, "I am a worthless person, and I am really comfortable with that. That's me, and I do not want it any other way." Quite the contrary. Having self-doubt about self-worth is typically a really painful place. And the pain is persistently protesting, "I don't want to be worthless!" People generally want a sense of self-worth. Nothing less will do.

What I conclude from these observations is that at some deep level, people already know that a sense of self-worth is integral to who they fundamentally are as a person. To be a person is to have worth, to be worthwhile. When we want other people to treat us as having worth, we are not wanting them to give us a worth we do not already have. Rather, we are wanting them to recognise and confirm the self-worth we already have. This confirmation by others is really important. We need it in order to recognise what we implicitly know at some level, that I am worthwhile. We need it for encouragement and reassurance that I really am the worthwhile person I long to be. When other people consistently confirm it in the way they treat us, it reassures us that our longed for worth is really really real. Others see it.

A lack of confirmation of worth, or the invalidation of worth by the way others treat us is a very common source of deep personal pain. Many of the driven things people do are a compensation for or defence against a lack of assurance about self-worth. Many of the psychological distresses in the form of anxiety or depression, likewise, are symptomatic of a self-doubt about self-worth. The really good news is that we all have self-worth. It goes with being a person. It is not a matter of creating a self-worth I lack, or earning a self-worth I do not have. Rather, it is a matter of becoming aware of what I already know at some level, that I am a valuable worthwhile person. And then it is owning that as my personal truth.

© 2016

“Sleep ...Chief Nourisher in Life's Feast”.

Melanie Birch

The title is a quote from Shakespeare's Macbeth. Here is the full quote:

*Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.*

And as elegantly as always, Shakespeare neatly sums up both the restorative qualities of sleep and how important it is. It does not get much more basic than being the chief nourisher in life's feast.

Yet at the point where it seems we are discovering, almost daily, new benefits of good quality sleep and the costs of poor quality sleep, we seem to be facing an epidemic of sleeplessness. So many people are finding it hard to get to sleep, get enough sleep, stay asleep for long enough or get sleep that leaves them feeling refreshed. In this article I will talk a little about some of the functions of sleep, the consequences of poor sleep and give some tips to lay the common foundations for good sleep.

Why do we sleep anyway?

Well we're not exactly sure how it developed that we sleep the way we do, but there are a bunch of activities that happen while we're asleep that are vital for us. Sleep helps the body rejuvenate and repair itself. For instance, the secretion of Growth Hormone by the pituitary gland peaks shortly after we fall asleep. Among other things it influences the metabolism of proteins, carbohydrates and lipids. Muscle growth and tissue repair also happen mostly when we are asleep.

Sleep is also when we consolidate memories. We learn new information every day, whether by design (e.g., studying) or simply by being awake and going about our normal tasks. The process of sorting and consolidating (or not keeping) those memories happens while we sleep.

What if we don't get enough sleep?

We all know how it feels! We are prone to get snappy more easily, not remember where the car keys are, say things we later regret, and make judgement calls we wish we hadn't. Lack of sleep also puts us at a higher risk of serious accidents and injuries.

But wait, there's more! Sleep deprivation studies show increased blood pressure, increased inflammation and impaired blood glucose control after a period of chronic poor sleep. There are links between hypertension, diabetes and obesity and poor sleep. It is probable that the relationship works both ways: poor sleep may worsen these and sleep may be worse because of them.

There is also an overlap between chronic poor sleep and depression and/or anxiety. It makes intuitive sense to us that if you are anxious you probably won't sleep well. Once the lights are off and all is quiet there is less to distract us from the anxious thoughts that were lurking in the background during the day. It is also the case that not being able to fall asleep or stay asleep are causes for anxiety. And until recently, if depression was diagnosed and insomnia was present, it was commonly seen as a symptom of depression. It is now better understood that depression and insomnia are distinct but often overlapping disorders. Treating them simultaneously, rather than assuming that sleep will improve once the depression has resolved, gives a much better chance of improving both areas of life.

Healthy sleep habits

The International Classification of Sleep Disorders lists 60 diagnoses within seven major categories! I will look at some of the more common ones in more detail in future articles. There are though sleep habits that apply to improving all sleep disorders. Here are some you can implement right now, or maybe decide to start after Christmas. (And getting better quality sleep is a great new year's resolution!)

1. Stop working on your computer, checking emails, texting friends and such an hour before bed. The blue light emitted by all modern electronic screens interferes with the normal night-time release of melatonin. We need this hormone, it is what helps induce sleep.
2. Nicotine, alcohol and caffeine should be wound down later in the day. They all affect the complex and delicate mechanisms in our brains that put us to sleep and keep us slumbering. The effects of nicotine stay in the body for 2-3 hours and if you're a smoker you might have noticed that you can be woken by the urge for another cigarette. Many advocate no coffee after mid afternoon for instance because although the "upper" from a cup of coffee is pretty much instant, and stays for 3-5 hours, it takes 8 hours for the caffeine to be metabolised out of your system. Alcohol is often thought to be useful for "taking the edge" off and helping induce sleep. While that might be, the price is paid for the rest of the night. Sleep rhythms are disrupted and the liver is busy detoxing the alcohol out of the body instead of doing its normal repair functions.
3. Walk! Outside! Daytime walking is excellent for improving sleep. Walking gets the body some exercise so that you are not feeling brain tired and body awake come bedtime. It is good for all the systems of the body, costs nothing and has the lowest barrier to stop you from doing it. Walking outside means exposure to natural daylight. This is important for the pineal gland, which produces melatonin, in turn regulating the body's internal sleep-wake cycle. It is very easy to spend days mostly inside under artificial light, especially in winter and for this to have a subtle but cumulative effect on the internal workings of brain sleep mechanisms.

These three steps are not the be all and end all to improving your sleep. You may or may not see big improvements just with these (and some will!). But they *are* the bedrocks to get right before we begin layering more tailored strategies for specific sleep difficulties in the next issue.

© 2016

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