

INFOCHANGE

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Letter from the President

Dear AHC Members,

The next few weeks are exciting times for us. We had another great webinar for the month of May. Drs. Victoria Kress and Julia Whisenhunt presented “Counseling Those who Self-Injure: A Strengths Based Approach.” Several examples of client-centered, strength-based, creative interventions and activities that can be used with this population were reviewed. Make sure to mark your calendar for the upcoming webinars on June 23rd and July 16th at 12:00pm CST. For the month of June, we are honored to have Dr. Richard Watts present on “Something Old is Something New: Adler's Humanistic and Positive Psychology Approach to Counseling.” During the month of July we will focus on ethics. Ann Ordway will present, “Staying True to your Humanistic Orientation while Interfacing with a Nonhumanistic Legal System.” All webinars are free for our members and members earn 1 contact hour. Please visit our website for more information.

We are just a few weeks away from the AHC National Conference in Cleveland. This year's conference features more than 80 presentations, round tables, and poster presentations focusing on Humanistic Counseling in Contemporary Times. We are honored to have Dr. James T. Hansen the recent author of *Philosophical Issues in Counseling Psychotherapy: Encounters with Four Questions about Knowing, Effectiveness, and Truth*, as our keynote speaker and the recipient of the Hollis Publication Award.

This is a wonderful time for us to learn from each other, reconnect with old friends and colleagues, make new friends, and celebrate our wonderful division. As I shared at the AHC town hall meeting at ACA in Orlando, one of the reasons I was drawn to this division is because it felt like a warm, comfortable space; I felt as if I was coming home when I became involved in AHC. Part of my reason for becoming involved with AHC was not just the mission and vision of our division, but how friendly and compassionate I found our members to be. If this is your first time attending a conference and/or an AHC conference, please reach out to me. I want you to feel at home and have a wonderful experience!

I would like to take this opportunity to extend a big thank you to all AHC national conference committee members, the AHC executive board, and all the volunteers who spent hundreds of volunteer person-hours all in preparation of your arrival to Cleveland. Thank you for making this conference possible! You have my sincere gratitude and appreciation!

I look forward to seeing you all soon in Cleveland.

Brandé Flamez, Ph.D., LPC, NCC



Retrieved from <http://www.lifenews.com/2015/03/19/democrats-vote-five-times-against-bill-to-help-sex-trafficking-victims-to-fund-abortion/>

Applying Humanistic Techniques with Survivors of Human Sex Trafficking: Clinical Implications and Personal Reflection

By Stacey Diane A Litam, M.A., LPC-CR

When examining the concept of human sex trafficking, what comes to mind? Do you envision a gripping scene from the 2008 film, *Taken*? Perhaps you recall an inspiring story of survival that you heard at a trauma-informed workshop or conference. Some of you may be surprised to learn that human sex trafficking, also known as modern day slavery, does not exclusively occur overseas. In fact, human sex trafficking occurs on local and national levels and at a rate that is 10 times greater than the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the 19th century (Chung, 2009). The International Labor Organization estimates 4.5 million people are sex trafficked globally, with over 3,000 reported U.S. cases in 2014. Federal law defines human sex trafficking as the “Recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age.”

Are you as appalled by these statistics as I am? How could this happen, in our own communities, right under our noses? After becoming aware of the prevalence and statistics of human sex trafficking, I have attended workshops, presentations, and trauma-informed trainings to best serve this population. As a counselor at a local Cleveland agency, I have the opportunity to work with survivors of human sex trafficking within my own community. I hope to share with you what Liam Neeson might refer to as “a particular set of skills” regarding how Humanistic principles have been helpful in promoting healing with survivors of human sex trafficking. Before I begin, I want to emphasize that these experiences are solely my own. It is important to individualize your own therapeutic interventions based on the unique strengths and desired areas of growth of your clients.

Many of the trafficked survivors I work with have solicitation charges, struggle with substance abuse, and carry emotional pain from a traumatic childhood. I have found that utilizing Humanistic principles and operating from a strength-based perspective has been especially helpful in promoting trust and developing a sense of safety with this population. The basic tenets of empathy and congruence empower clients to feel safe, heard, and unconditionally accepted. Specific examples of how Humanistic principles can be integrated with survivors of human sex trafficking include emphasis of the survivor’s personal narrative, promoting the dignity and worth of the client, and an exploration of how mindfulness can alleviate dissociative symptoms while promoting emotion regulation.

Understandably, many clients are apprehensive to disclose any personal information. I have found that structuring assessments intentionally can empower the women by offering a sense of control. In this case, encouraging the client to share her story as opposed to asserting a more “question/answer” format allows women to begin exploring and processing her personal narratives without feeling interviewed or judged.

For survivors of human sex trafficking experiencing a sense of control over the assessment may be the first step toward healing. Many women who engage in solicitation do not identify as trafficked. Instead, some women minimize and reframe the act of exchanging sex acts for drug money as a means to an end. I felt humbled when one woman explained how she was trafficked for a period of time but compared to her home life, she felt it was an improvement. For clients who struggle with addictions, I have found it helpful to process the fundamental differences between solicitation and being trafficked. To be “trafficked” infers that one is exchanging a sexual service under the guise of threat, coercion, or force with fear of physical or emotional harm. I invite the women to consider how addiction pursues the act, not the person. In one instance, a woman became tearful and agreed that had it not been for her addiction, she would not be soliciting. I witnessed a wave of relief and understanding as another woman agreed, “heroin is my pimp.” The trafficked woman struggling with addiction is indeed coerced to pursue these exchanges. In most cases, she would not be engaged in the behavior otherwise. Helping survivors recognize how behavior is separate from herself has been a wonderful way to promote personal growth, forgiveness, and emotional healing.

Promoting the dignity and worth of the individual is another Humanistic tenet I strive to pursue with my clients. Survivors of sex trafficking are often burdened with emotional pain from traumatic early childhood experiences. I have found it valuable to help women understand that when traumatic events occur, the desire to avoid or escape the pain is a natural response. As a result, trafficked women and survivors of trauma tend to develop coping mechanisms that facilitate a sense of escape, or avoidance. In many of my client cases, the desire to “escape” inevitably leads to substance use and she becomes gripped by her addictions, caught in a

Guiding the client toward an understanding that traumatic responses are normal reactions to abnormal events helps the client reframe her early desire to avoid emotional pain and empowers her with a deeper understanding of her struggles. Adhering to a strength-based perspective that demonstrates empathy and unconditional positive regard helps the client conceptualize her actions as a result of “faulty coping skills” developed in response to traumatic events. I emphasize that the coping skills, not the person, is flawed.

Many survivors of human sex trafficking inevitably struggle with the heightened physiological response to triggers and trauma reminders. For clients who dissociate or struggle to alleviate feelings of intense anxiety, I have found that teaching clients about mindfulness can be an empowering resource. Mindfulness combines nonjudgmental acceptance with diaphragmatic breathing. Additionally, physical grounding encourages the client to focus on her immediate physical and emotional sensations, which empowers her to “remain in her body”. In my experience, providing psychoeducation on the effects of trauma on the mind, body and spirit helps the client obtain a deeper understanding and normalization of her physiological responses. I was moved when one client began our session by explaining how, for the first time, she finally felt in control of her body.

Ultimately, working with survivors of human trafficking has reinforced the Humanistic concept that clients already have the resources and strengths to pursue a fulfilling life. As counselors, we must continue to honor clients as the expert of their lives and simply journey with them toward healing. Working with this population has instilled a renewed sense of hope and humility for me as a counselor. Exploring the client’s narrative and identifying her unique strengths while displaying empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard have been paramount in building the trust necessary to promote forgiveness and positive change.

Member Spotlight: Elizabeth Hancock



By Blake Sandusky, Ed.S., LPC, LMFT

I am able to call this issue's spotlight member a friend and can thank her for being the person who introduced me to AHC. I remember it was my first week on campus at Auburn University as a first year counselor education and supervision doctoral student and I felt very lost. I met Elizabeth, and through our conversation we discussed my own ideas about counseling and once she found out I identified as a humanistic counselor she invited me to join AHC. She also invited me to work with the newsletter. I have been able to meet so many interesting and dynamic educators and counselors through AHC, and I have Elizabeth to thank!

She has been involved with AHC since 2012 after being encouraged by a professor to join and get involved. Since then she has taken off with the work and leadership she offers AHC. She began work as the co-editor of the newsletter and has since moved to the technology committee. There have been many updates and changes since Elizabeth became a part of this committee. We as an organization now have great free webinars for all members each month. The technology committee also has made changes to the website and social media outlets. There is also changes to help update and streamline the way we connect with members and communicate about AHC and events.

The webinars now offered by AHC, free to members, began as a desire from leadership to connect and offer more services to members. Elizabeth credits the public relations committee and their hard work to develop the webinars series, thanks to them for the great opportunity to learn through these series. Even though the webinar series have been in existence for a few months the reviews about these series is outstanding. Elizabeth works with the technology committee to host these webinars while also promoting them through AHC various social media outlets.

Not only does Elizabeth work closely with AHC in technology but she also identifies as a humanistic counselor in her work with clients in the juvenile justice system in Alabama. She describes humanistic counseling as the heart of counseling. She believes that heart is valuing the client as an individual, no matter their circumstances or past. She tries to focus her work with juveniles on unconditional positive regard while encouraging growth for clients in all aspects of their lives. She has found that by trying to simply treat others in a manner where they feel valued helps in developing therapeutic relationships.

Elizabeth is a dedicated doctoral candidate who enjoys joining herself with her clients and working to promote humanistic ideals through academics and her professional practice. She encourages anyone looking to be more involved in AHC to contact her with any interest in joining the technology committee and the work they are doing with webinars and connecting members and those interested in humanistic counseling with AHC. She believes strongly in AHC and believes that our organization is a great home for many counselors and would encourage those who aren't members to read about AHC on our website and consider joining.

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: A Humanistic Call to Action

By Russell Pyle



A perceived dominant trend in counseling career choice is to work in the behavioral health field as a just that: a counselor. In counseling education programs across the country it is observed that counselors are taught to be a certain way and work in a particular environment if they are to be members of the profession. This has drastic and dire implications for the field of counseling, resulting in the creation of a box that many counselors both begin and end their careers entrapped. This can be quite cumbersome and inhibits creativity and possibilities.

One such possibility that is not often discussed is work with persons who have intellectual or developmental disabilities. This population is often overlooked because of a misconception regarding who can benefit from counseling. Counseling has been traditionally viewed as a process where there needs to be a “normal” level of cognitive functioning for acceptable outcomes to take place (e.g. an IQ of 70 or higher), however this could not be further from the truth. If, as humanistic counselors, we believe that healing comes from the counseling relationship then we must accept that this axiom is false. People who have a lower level of cognitive functioning often have the same capacity to form relationships as those in the higher percentiles; they just may need a different environment where they can thrive. As humanistic counselors, creation of this environment is part of the basic tenets that guide our practice.

The Developmental Disabilities Waiver from Medicaid provides counselors with an opportunity to assist in the creation of this optimal environment by becoming behavioral support consultants (BSC). The DD Waiver was created to assist individuals who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities in living full and meaningful lives, making choices on their own in how they want to live. It allows them to take part in residential communities, work and recreational programs, as well as community support to integrate into the community in a way that provides them with the utmost level of fulfillment. The role of the BSC is to develop positive behavioral support plans and ensure that these plans are followed in a person-centered manner by the teams that work with individuals on the waiver.

This can include residential workers, dayhab workers, job coaches, and family members, amongst others that may be on the team.

There has been a paradigm shift in the way the services on the waiver are delivered, specifically leaning towards a person-centered perspective. Although there are some differences in how strict Rogerians employ this perspective, the DD Waiver maintains the core beliefs of nonjudgment, warmth, positive regard, relationships, congruence, and trust in the client. Teams working with individuals often need consultation and training on how to work in this way, and that is where BSCs come in. By guiding the team in a humanistic manner we help ensure that everyone who is working with them is enriching the client’s lives. Furthermore, when a client experiences patterns of behavior that are damaging to them, the teams know how to assist the clients in developing new patterns that will support the optimal environment needed to live a full and happy life.

Relationships with the client and team are paramount to success as a BSC, therefore regular contact is a must. BSCs serve as information gatherers in order to provide the best consultation possible, and therefore must balance the team’s communication with communication with the client as well. The BSC serves as an advocate for the client and as an arbitrator between team members (and often between the clients and their teams as well). Helping the team understand that the client has the power and strength to accomplish goals and confront dignified risks successfully is a stalwart of the consultation process, and this cannot be done without the development of strong relationships with the clients and all who work with them.

As the DD Waiver has adopted a person-centered approach there have been observed growing pains. An old order of consultants continues to thrive and work in the field without an adequate understanding of the person-centered approach and therefore appear to ignore it entirely, relying instead on punitive measures to address unwanted behaviors, and a blaming vernacular and tone that serves to shame the clients rather than lift them up. This is why it is important that more counselors with strong knowledge and commitment to the humanistic tradition sorely needed to become consultants. I hope this piece inspires more of us to pick up the torch and run.

If you have any questions about becoming a BSC (its quite simple) and how you can supplement your traditional practice with consultation, please email me at: riversbendcounseling@gmail.com.

Article Review

Sumner, B.S., Heidel, R. E., Studer, J.R. (2014). **Bullying: A Wellness Concern Among Appalachian Youth.** *Journal of Humanistic Counseling*, 53, 86-100.

Reviewed by Karin Hansing, PhD, Assistant Professor in the School of Professional Counseling at Lindsey Wilson College

Bullying is a topic that schools systems, communities and social media are all too aware of. There have been multiple research studies done surrounding this topic. The authors of this study desired to find out the relationship different types of bullying and specific wellness factors. Through the use of a strength-based holistic measure they were able to collect data to answer their questions.

Bullying can start at a young age and continue throughout adulthood. The long term effects of bullying include impairment at work, school and overall health (Meglich-Sespico, Faley, & Knapp, 2007). The types of bullying addressed in this study were: direct which includes physical and verbal, indirect which includes relational (i.e. rumor spreading and ignoring) and cyberbullying. The use of a humanistic approach with these bully targets nurtures the development in all dimensions of personal wellness by connecting mind, body and spirit.

This survey was developed by the authors in order to distinguish between different types of bullying and other

aggressive behaviors. The Five Factor Wellness Inventory-Elementary version (5F-Wel-E) was developed with a holistic view of individuals and measures five second-order factors: the Creative Self, Coping Self, Social Self, Essential Self and Physical Self which are broken down even further into 17 third-order factors.

The authors suggest that overall wellness declines when students experience high frequencies of bullying. Unlike other studies, the authors found that the Creative Self factor (i.e., Thinking, Emotions, Control, Positive Humor and Work) was found to be least affected by relational bullying and cyberbullying.

The implications for counselors provided were thorough. The authors identified current trends for handling bullying in most school systems and provided alternative approaches and developmentally appropriate programs. Another study finding that was addressed in the implication section was the negative relationship between cyberbullying and exercise. This can be a result of hypervigilance from the caregivers but ultimately results in an inability to problem solve when interacting with peers. The humanistic approach to wellness is holistic and based on the needs of the client.

The author's study results and limitations aided in their development of the implications for research. The narrow population limited the ability to generalize the study results. The results supported the need for counselors to address the wellness factors that are effect by bullying which will encourage healthy development of relationships between peers, authority figures and their school.

Graduate Student Spotlight

Stacey Diane A Litam, M.A., LPC-CR

Stacey Diane A Litam, MA, LPC-CR, is doctoral student enrolled in Kent State University's Counselor Education and Supervision program. Her research interests include cross cultural supervision, social justice issues, creative interventions, and working with survivors of human sex trafficking. Stacey has diverse clinical experience including work within a community mental health center and in private practice.



Stacey is involved with a variety of professional counseling organizations including AHC and IAMFC. She is passionate about advocacy and is a board member for Tareto Maa.

Tareto Maa is an international non-profit that provides education and resources to girls in Kilgoris, Kenya who refuse to be victims of forced child marriage and female genital mutilation. In December 2015, Stacey will be joining AHC president Dr. Brande Flamez and conference chair Dr. Martina Moore on an international service trip to Tanzania through SALTworld, a non-profit social service organization designed to provide volunteer services to developing countries.

As a National Associate Conference Planner for AHC, Stacey has been hard at work with her conference planning committee. She is excited to connect with you all at the 2015 AHC conference in Cleveland, Ohio on June 5th and 6th.

You can learn more about Stacey and the 2015 AHC conference at www.humanisticcounselor.com or email Slitam@kent.edu

Editor's Note

By Jennifer Rogers, Ph.D., Co-Editor InfoChange



“Success is to be measured not so much by the position one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed.” Booker T. Washington

Duckworth and colleagues (2007) researched the concept of grit which was defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Grit goes beyond the traditional success measure of IQ. It has been researched as a noncognitive trait. These researchers discovered that those who achieve difficult goals are not merely those with the largest measurable intelligence but it is the sustained and focused- application of talent over time. It was also noted that “older individuals tended to be higher in grit than younger individuals, suggesting that the quality of grit, although a stable individual difference, may nevertheless increase over the life span” (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007, p. 1098).

Understanding grit as a trait may help us in our work and personal lives. Success can have very different meanings for each of us and the people we work with. If we can develop this trait, it can provide a roadmap to overcome obstacles and obtain goals. It is important that we celebrate our personal successes big and small to recognize where we have been and what it took us to get where we are now. And with that I congratulate all of the individuals who have reached their goals. Celebrate your success and reflect on the grit that got you there.

Duckworth, A., Peterson, C., Matthews, M., & Kelly, D. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals. *Personality Processes and Individual Differences*, 92(6), 1087-1101.

We are accepting submissions for the next InfoChange newsletter! Share thoughts, experiences, expressions of art, and any other original work you'd like to share with our community. Email submissions to infochangeahc@gmail.com