

Valley Pastoral Counseling Center, Inc.

OUTREACH

Fall 2015

Providing Spiritually Sensitive Psychotherapy to the Shenandoah Valley Since 1980

300 Chestnut Ave - Waynesboro, VA 22980 540-943-8722 540-886-5757 www.valleypastoral.org

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What do I do “Beyond the Couch”? Or in other words, what do I do in addition to psychotherapy? My two major interests beyond therapy are supervision and education. I list them below so that you or your organization can call on me as needed in these areas.

Supervision

1. Clergy: Clergypersons of all denominations and faiths often find themselves in need of continuing education and training in pastoral care, administration, church conflict resolution, and teaching. I have been fortunate to help a number of ministers in their ongoing ministry practices, and am available to any who find themselves in need of a consultant or supervisor.
2. Pastoral Care Specialists (PCS): At VPCC we offer a pastoral care specialist training program that has been approved by the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC). I am both a training supervisor and faculty member of this program. The training is designed to train clergy and/or laity in short-term pastoral care and counseling skills.
3. Licensed Profession Counselor (LPC): Licensed Professional Counselor trainees in the state of Virginia are required to do a practicum, internship, and residency. I have been supervising LPC practicum students, interns, and residents since 1998 and my therapeutic orientation is psychodynamic psychotherapy.

Education

Over the years I have been involved in my own continuing education and have developed areas of interest and expertise that I particularly enjoy teaching to interested audiences. The subject areas listed below span the last twenty years of my own educational endeavors and are also the subject areas I would like to share with you or your group.

1. The Services, Counselors, and Programs of Valley Pastoral Counseling Center: As the Executive Director of VPCC I am always happy to share with interested organizations about who we are, what we do, where we came from and where we are headed in the future.
2. Pastoral Care, Counseling and Psychotherapy-- History, Theory and Practice: This area will be of interest to lay caregivers, ministers, and anyone interested in pastoral counseling, both how to receive it and how to offer it to others as well as how pastoral counseling differs from traditional psychotherapy.
3. Long-Term Intensive Psychotherapy-- History, Theory, and Practice: Clients as well as other therapists, counselors, and pastors will be interested in what long-term personality changing psychotherapy is all about and how you can obtain it for yourself or offer it to others.
4. Evolutionary Psychology and Psychotherapy—History, Theory, and Practice: Evolutionary psychology is one of the newest approaches to the theory and practice of psychotherapy and counseling. It helps us understand how we have evolved into the people we are today and how similar yet different we are from our ancient ancestors. This area will be of interest to those wishing to explore how our evolutionary development is enhancing counseling.
5. Neuroscience and Psychotherapy—History, Theory, and Practice: With new imaging techniques and technologies we are able to see our brains functioning from moment to moment. The observing of the brain in action is revolutionizing our understanding of the mind and how it

operates. This new knowledge will be of interest to anyone wishing to receive or offer more effective psychotherapy.

From these five areas above, many different talks, lectures, and programs could be developed to meet the specific needs of your group or organization. Let me know of your interests and needs and I will work with you in developing an educational presentation that your group will find helpful. Call me to discuss any supervision or educational needs you have at 932-9721.

Other Services Available

By Bill Huffman M.Div., M.A., LPC

The training and education that a Pastoral Psychotherapist receives enables the therapist to engage in number of different activities both on site and in the community. I enjoy teaching a variety of related subjects and work hard at bringing objectivity into discussions. As a Clinical Supervisor I enjoy helping students new to the field of Psychotherapy develop both their skill level and knowledge base. Outlined below are the areas that I am interested in engaging in the community and onsite.

Supervision: In addition to providing clinical supervision for interns and residents who are seeking LPC licensure, I provide pastoral care and assessment training and supervision for clergy. The goal of training for clergy is to help them recognize the various forms of mental illness that they may encounter when meeting with congregants and to also recognize different personality types and the talents and challenges that each bring to a congregation. The goal of supervision is to monitor the application of the newly gained knowledge and to insure accurate, ethical use of the information that has been gained. In addition to assessment, clergy is provided with guidelines on when to refer and possible referral sources. . I also provide supervision and instruction for our AAPC Pastoral Care Specialist Program. More information is available at the American Association of Pastoral Counselors website as well as Valley Pastoral Counseling Center website.

Consultation: Consulting with congregations in conflict is another service that I provide. This service includes working through issues of discipleship that may result in a congregational split or larger schisms. The goal is to save the relationship that exists between the different groups in a congregation while working through issues with objectivity and compassion.

In addition to working with congregational conflict, services are also provided to work toward resolving conflicts between congregations and clergy. Often pastoral transitions create difficulties for both the new pastor and the congregation as they get to know each other and experience leadership in a new and different way. The goal is to prevent congregants from leaving a church that has experienced pastoral transition and to reconcile feelings of loss and grief so often experienced when an established pastor leaves that position by facilitating healing conversations and an understanding of the experience of each.

Many churches are in decline as a result of variety different factors. Most often churches in decline have lost appropriate focus which inhibits or prevent church growth. I provide consultation services designed to refocus congregations and pastors through re-envisioning the mission of the church and providing programs intended to reenergize congregations and pastors.

Education: Congregations have a variety of educational needs. Consequently, seminars on a variety of subjects pertinent to congregational life and the issues of the day are available. Subjects such as relationship skills, marriage seminars, biblical engagement with current issues, group and individual spiritual direction and engagement with the spiritual disciplines are possible subjects for consideration.

As a Pastoral Psychotherapist I have had the opportunity to engage different sources related to current issues as a result of our continuing education requirements. As a theologian, I have been challenged by the understandings that I have gained by engaging scientific information related to human development, development of the brain and the social sciences. Consequently, I bring a balanced approach to discussions and presentations related to church issues of the day.

Outlined above is a brief description of the services that I provide. Other services can be provided on request including evaluation of pastoral candidates and recommendations based on the candidate's personality traits. So, if I can be of assistance please contact me at Valley Pastoral Counseling Service.

How Long Before I Start to Feel Better?

by Emilie Slechta Thomas, MA LMFT

Psychotherapy can be hard work. In order for real healing to take place, we need to dig deep within and root out the causes of our suffering. That often means revisiting unpleasant memories and facing difficult facts about ourselves and our habits that we would rather not see. Only then, with increased awareness and insight, can we make the changes in our lives and reduce our unconscious and compulsive behaviors that hinder our ability to know love and joy. The rewards are great, but the process takes courage and stamina.

I feel that most everyone has the courage and stamina to do the work, whether they know it or not. However, many times a client initially comes to me complaining of fatigue, emotional numbness, lack of motivation, anxiety, or anger and resentment. These complaints do not easily lend themselves to diving into a client's difficult behaviors. How can anyone make the effort to create lasting change within themselves when they can barely get out of bed in the morning? How can we as a team get past the emotional barriers that trap a client in a cycle of anxiety or depression so that we can access deep healing through psychotherapy?

These questions have led me to obtain additional training and development in somatic (body focused) and energetic interventions to expand the scope of my practice. For instance, following many years of research and developing my own practice, I have learned that beginning yoga poses can literally and quickly ease anxiety or dispel overwhelming anger. Using gentle and easy postures in session or teaching them to a client to try at home provides a concrete tool to manage emotions in a way that is reliable and repeatable. None of these poses involve the strength or flexibility one often associates with yoga. They merely require the ability to breathe, and I think that we can all agree that even on the worst days we can at least do that.

Another approach I have integrated into my practice involves energy psychology, which uses acupressure points on the body to manage the energy flow within. Using the same philosophy as the well known healing art of acupuncture, energy psychology focuses on the idea that emotions can be stored in the body, and it aims to release or balance them through a tapping stimulation by the client of the acupressure points. It is especially effective in disconnecting the links of extreme emotions as they relate to trauma, but the treatment has also been known to relieve anxiety and depressive symptoms as well.

In my fifteen years of working in the field of mental, emotional, and spiritual healing, I have found that few interventions work as well or as permanently as finding the causes of past wounds and

increasing understanding and awareness of how they interfere with well being. Such awareness increases control over current behavior and mood. However, when feelings are so overwhelming that a client finds it hard to think, somatic interventions can go a long way-with no side effects- towards relieving the symptoms long enough to let the deeper work begin.

If you would like to make an appointment or gather more information about my approach, please call me at 540-932-1476.

Groups

By Melissa Hansen M.S. LPC

Aside from psychotherapy and counseling in an individual, couple, or family context, I have a variety of interests and experiences in working with groups. Working with groups is profoundly different from much of the work that takes place in my office and I am quite interested in group work and how we can learn about ourselves and grow in this guided context.

I have previously conducted support groups for **Grief and Loss** and **Anxiety and Stress**. I believe those groups were quite impactful and helpful for those who participated in them. Furthermore, I have led and orchestrated several seminars, retreats, conferences, and break-out groups over the last 15 years. These have primarily centered around: **Women's Issues, Spiritual and Religious Concerns, Social Media, and Marriage Enrichment (my husband presented with me)**. Finally, areas in which I am interested, but in which I do not have a great deal of experience are **Processing Cross-Cultural Experiences and Individual Well-Being and Thriving**.

Topics in Alphabetical Order:

Anxiety and Stress - Stress is normal and natural and reminds us we are alive, but too much stress and anxiety is unhealthy, dangerous, and can be terrifying and debilitating. This support group addresses sources of stress and the many ways of coping with stressful circumstances and its side effects.

Grief and Loss - We all experience loss in our lives from the death of grandparents to the losses associated with moving or divorce. We have all had to grieve. The point of this support group is mourning and processing the past, moving through the present with grace, and envisioning a hope-filled future.

Individual Well-Being and Thriving - How do we go from living in crisis, to surviving and coping, to thriving in our lives? What is an individual who is vibrant and alive like? How do we engage and embrace our lives with gratitude, regardless of our circumstances or our emotions even when things are painful, challenging, and not as we would have them be?

Marriage Enrichment - Is a thriving marriage possible? And if so, what are its characteristics? This 3-9 hour seminar is interactive and engaging around the possibility of thriving marriage and how to move your relationship in that direction.

Processing Cultural Crossings and Experiences - Whether you have been overseas on a short-term mission trip, a business trip, or a vacation - adjusting culturally and reverse culture shock upon returning can be surprising and difficult. How do we honor the good in other cultures and in different experiences, while processing what is challenging about changing from one culture to another?

Religious and Spiritual Concerns - This is obviously a broad subject area and depending on what you are looking for, I can prepare something specific.

Social Media - This seminar was designed for youth and parents. There is time for youth and parents separately to discuss with peers, the ins and outs of social media, particularly for today's youth and families. Youth and their parents are then brought back together to begin the conversation about how to engage with social media and how to set appropriate boundaries around it.

Women's Issues - I have led/presented at several women's conferences and retreats. Topics have varied from mentoring, to loving and being loved, to women's particular struggles with fear and anxiety

My Journey to VPCC
By Angela Leyshon B.S.

In the year 1993, I began my journey toward a BS in Psychology at John Tyler Community College in Midlothian, VA; however, I did not receive my degree until the year 2000 from Virginia Commonwealth University, due to family obligations. My family has always been my priority and still is, being a mother of four. After a long break, my husband encouraged me to pursue a Masters in Professional Counseling in 2012 at Liberty University Online program which fit nicely into our family's schedule. Today, I am thrilled to announce that I have completed all of the course requirements at Liberty and have begun my internship as a therapist at VPCC. I feel very blessed to have been introduced to the wonderful people at VPCC and doubly blessed that I have been given the opportunity to work alongside some of the finest therapist, learning from their examples as well as being guided by their experience and knowledge. This time next year, I hope to say that I have earned a Masters in Professional Counseling from Liberty University and that I am resident working toward becoming licensed by the glorious state of Virginia.

CONGRATULATIONS!!

We are pleased to announce that we have a new Licensed Professional Counselor associated with Valley Pastoral Counseling Center. On November 13th Melissa Hansen sat for her State Board Exam and passed with flying colors. The journey to licensure is a long and arduous one which includes obtaining a masters degree in counseling, completing a supervised practicum, internship and residency. Preparation for the exam includes many hours of study from a variety of resources. Many of us spend months in preparation for the exam itself as well as continuing to provide counseling services as we study. So, our hats are off to Melissa as she embarks on her professional journey!!

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COUNSELING CENTER**
300 CHESTNUT AVENUE
Waynesboro, VA 22980

New Website Design!

At VPCC we recognize the need for ease of access to our information for our potential clients. This need has led us to have our website redesigned and we are very excited about the new look and other improvements.

Improvements include a map and driving directions, more information about our services, ease of use, and the inclusion of our newsletter as well as important information about our Associates.

Note to Pastors

We are requesting that Pastors in the area provide VPCC with an email address so that we may supply an electronic copy of our newsletter to them. Electronic copies are easily distributed to your congregations through your distribution list. Please send your email address to pastoral@ntelos.net.

IT IS OKAY TO SEEK HELP!

It is easy to schedule an appointment with us. Please contact Stephanie Sterling at (540) 932-9722 and give your name and number. Ms. Sterling or one of our Associates will return your call and discuss scheduling an appointment. You will be warmly welcomed with care, compassion and understanding. For general information please call (540) 943-8722 or (540) 886-5757.

Great News!

VPCC has been designated as a Category 1 Pastoral Care Specialist Training Center by the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. The training program has been designed for those who have theological training and who desire to provide care to individuals of various religious traditions. Training and supervision is provided by the Associates at VPCC. For information about the program or to schedule an interview please contact Emilie Thomas LMFT at (540) 932-1476.

