



Counseling Connections

Student Views from the Field

For the past 2 years I have been working as a Peer Support Specialist on an Assertive Community Treatment Team (ACTT); which offers supportive and psychiatric services to adults with severe and persistent mental illness. Our team of 6 clinicians and one doctor supports up to 48 clients in the community. We provide supportive counseling, help with daily activities such as shopping, transportation to medical, court, and treatment appointments, as well support in obtaining services like vocational rehab, food stamps, and affordable housing.

My experiences in school and work have been invaluable to each other. Work has provided a bedrock of experience to pull into my classes and answer the question "So what?" when applying concepts like boundary concerns and confidentiality in ethics, or dual diagnosis of mental illness and substance dependence.

My coursework is informing my job on a daily basis

by again keeping ethical concerns in the forefront, as well as providing me with new perspectives and frameworks with which to view and support my clients. I have already made "Assessment is treatment" a mantra in my office. My work makes the textbooks and research "come alive", in a sense. I am attaching theories to faces that I see on a daily basis, and this provides momentum and fuels my passion as I pursue my studies.



By Michael Hayes

During winter break, I was offered a job opportunity I couldn't refuse. I was hired as a part-time assistant to a private practice LPC whom I had met during my time as a case manager. She mainly needed help with organization, paperwork, and other clerical duties. What an amazing gift it has been so far! Together we waded through billing, diagnoses, scheduling, theories, creating charts, and much of the work required to maintain a private practice. It is as if I am taking a fifth course this semester- Intro to Private Practice, and I am getting paid to take it!

The work is not all fun. I am learning the value of establishing very organized systems for tracking authorizations, billing, and other ongoing tasks. I am exposed to the frustration of working with clients who have both Medicaid and Medicare (M&Ms, she calls them) and "incident to" billing.

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ACA Conference

This year from March 19th to the 23rd, the American Counseling Association Conference and Exposition will be coming to North Carolina for the first time in its history. This conference provides an excellent opportunity for students and professionals to come together for development and connection. The conference will be held in downtown Charlotte, one of the fastest growing cities in the United States, which is a short two hour drive from Asheville. The North Carolina Counseling Association is co-sponsoring the conference this year, and it could be first-rate exposure for representatives from the Western Carolina University program.

There will be over 500 educational sessions offered in more than 30 different categories. For professionals already working in the counseling field, the conference is offering 20 free CE credits and free consultation on ethical issues. For students moving into the field, the conference provides superb networking possibilities and job interviews. Noted speakers include Gerald Corey, Jane Myers, Courtland Lee, and Chris Moll. Key-note speakers include C. Adolfo Bermo, speaking on developing a climate of access, equity, and excellence in education for all students, and Judy Shepard, speaking on keeping our schools and communities safer from hate crimes. Also, from our campus **Russ Curtis, Phyllis Robertson** and Jill Van Horne will be presenting their research on School Wide Positive Behavioral Support. **Russ Curtis** and Eric Christian are also presenting on Integrated Health Care.

The Pre-Conference Learning Institutes will be offered for an additional fee on Thursday, March 19th and Friday, March 20th. The Conference Educational Sessions will be offered from Saturday, March 21st to Monday, March 23rd. The exposition will open on Friday, March 20th, and there will be more than 100 exhibitors showcasing products and services for counseling professionals through Sunday, March 22nd. There will also be opportunities to explore Charlotte and surrounding areas through North Carolina Counseling Association Events.



For registration, price scales or further information please call 800-347-6647 ext. 222 or visit www.counseling.org/conference



Message from Lisen :

In the fall, I sent everyone an email with a proposed schedule change for new students who will begin the program in 2009. I asked for feedback and was pleased to hear from so many of you. Your thoughts paralleled the faculty's— 2 years is intense; 2.5 years might be unattractive to prospective students; summer school is too expensive ; coursework along with internship is difficult... and lots more. We appreciate you voicing your compliments, concerns, questions, and other comments. At our January 2009 annual faculty retreat, we decided to create two schedule options to incoming students. They will individually choose the 2.5-year program or the 2-year program. What's more, the first semester for either option will be identical, so that students can make an informed decision about their scheduling at the start of their 2nd semester. Thank you again for your input. The faculty will continue to monitor this and all other program-wide concerns, always striving to best serve program needs. —Lisen

Student Views from the Field



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I am struggling with insurance companies and shocked by low reimbursement rates. I am learning about office rentals, equipment, supplies, and support from colleagues. These are some of the realities associated with running a private practice. It's actually been fantastic to be able to work through these tasks, especially because each comes with lessons and suggestions for how to apply them to my own future practice. She has also been teaching me Hakomi, biofeedback, play therapy, and other techniques she uses in her practice. Although this training is unofficial, it has been invaluable, and I am grateful for the exposure.

I would highly recommend this kind of opportunity to anyone in our program looking for part time work. Being in school full-time, working as a GA and putting in hours as a LPC assistant can feel overwhelming. However my work outside of school is an extension of what we are learning, and feels like a valuable use of my precious time. By Morgana Davis

Last semester and this semester I have worked as a GA at the Counseling and Psychological Services Center at WCU. While I am doing clerical work for much of the time, I have also had the opportunity to learn vicariously through talking with the psychologists and counselors on staff. I have had the opportunity to sit in on a couple of training/intern meetings in which I have picked up on valuable information that will help me as a future counselor. These meetings have helped me appreciate the importance and usefulness of collaboration. Perhaps the most significant experience has been my involvement with the biofeedback (emWave) technology which helps retrain the body to reestablish coherency within the physiological and mental states thereby reducing high levels of stress.

This semester, one of my projects includes developing, coordinating, and facilitating a stress reduction group at the center. I am excited to actually get hands-on experience in doing this, and I consider it a huge compliment that the staff of CPS feels I am qualified to do so. The group will not consist of any type of counseling activities per se, but instead will focus on identifying stress triggers and learning ways to relax and cope when faced with high levels of stress. I consider this time a productive blessing even though it can be very stressful. Overall, the experience at CPS is one I consider to be invaluable. By Janet Sutton



Tips to help keep the Flu Away:

- Get a flu vaccination – it's not too late, and these are available at the University Health Center. Based on CDC statistics, this year's flu vaccine is effective against the type A reported cases seen thus far around the country.
- Wash your hands – wash for at least 30 seconds, sing Row Row Row your boat 3 times
- Keep your hands away from your face – studies show that people typically touch their face 15 times per hour, this spreads germs and viruses from your hands to your face
- Eat Right, get your Vitamins – try to consume the average daily recommendation of fruits and vegetables
- Reduce Stress and Get to Sleep – going without proper amounts of sleep reduces your immune response, you need between seven and nine hours of sleep per night
- Reduce Alcohol Consumption – regular alcohol users tend to have a decreased immune response and find themselves suffering from more colds and symptoms than non-drinkers

Announcements

Volunteers



Needed

Alert: Reach of Jackson County is in need of Crisis hotline volunteers! REACH is a non-profit organization dedicated to the eradication of domestic violence. They serve the Western North Carolina population, and they are requesting assistance from our counseling community. They will train anyone who is willing to commit to being on call as little as once a month. If you are interested in serving and protecting your community please call Kathy at (828) 631-4488 or email Kris Moore at kebmooore0405@gmail.com.

There is a new labyrinth on the campus of UNCA. Labyrinths have many meanings and uses but the one on the campus of UNCA was created primarily as a place for contemplative meditation. Instructions for the proper use of this labyrinth can be found at its entrance. The use of this practice is ancient and is an excellent form of self care. The location of this new labyrinth is between the library and the Weizenblatt building.



From the Editor:

Much thanks to Morgana, Michael, Janet, the professors and others who contributed to this issue. *Counseling Connections* is a community tool which is built upon combined participation. If you'd like to publish your thoughts on counseling, your experience with the program thus far, your poetry, stories, art, film reviews, or information about conferences email them to Bryan Wilson at j.bryanwilson@gmail.com. I would also love to hear about any other suggestions or comments you might have for the improvement of our publication.



Questions for carpool conversation:

1. What was your favorite vacation or holiday?
2. If money was not important what would your perfect vacation look like?
3. What is the most valuable knowledge that you have gained in the past month?
4. What is the most memorable book you ever read?
5. What made this book so intriguing to you personally?

Counseling implications in popular culture

Warning: This review does contain limited spoilers, and this film is not recommended for sensitive viewers.

How do we define ourselves? When is identity stabilized? Can loss change our identity? How central is our profession to our identity? These are just a few of the questions that Darren Aronofsky poses in the film *The Wrestler*. We look at these questions as they pertain to lives of Randy "the Ram" Robinson (Mickey Rourke) and his love interest, Pam (Marisa Tomei). At the beginning of the film we find Randy as an older wrestler who is clinging to the days of his youthful fame. He is driven to continue performing by the admiration of his fans and his desire to entertain them. However, Randy has a heart attack and is told by his doctors that if he continues to wrestle he will most likely die. Randy then finds himself alone, searching for a new purpose. Randy first begins to fill some of his new void by pursuing a partner. We are introduced to his love interest in her profession as an exotic dancer. She is hesitant to respond to the advances of Randy, because she clearly wants to separate her identity outside the club from her profession. Her stage name is Cassidy, and several times throughout the film we are given glimpses of her identity confusion as she longs to be called Pam and to be known as a mom, not a dancer. Randy also then seeks to find some connection and new identity in being a father. However because Randy spent so much of his early life invested in his identity as a wrestler, his transition to being a father is difficult for his daughter and himself. At one point in the film the protagonist is so robbed of his purpose as he sees it that he denies his identity as Randy the Ram. This almost immediately sends him into such internal conflict that he explodes in anger. Rourke does an amazing job of portraying a man broken from any real connection to others and any understanding of his personal value outside of wrestling. This film gives us a gritty understanding of some our clients as they try to define themselves in the context of losing their perceived purpose. By Bryan Wilson

