Building community and identity by encouraging members to share ideas and experiences, and offering support to one another in pursuit of present and future educational goals.

Mind Over Matters
WCPC Monthly Newsletter

Club News
by MoM Editor Jessica Kramer

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate all the students who are graduating this month. Congratulations on your hard work and best wishes for continued success in all of your future endeavors!

A warm welcome to our new executive board members: Vice President - Alyssa Flaherty and Membership Coordinator - Olivia King.

This month the WCPC has a lot of upcoming events. Be sure to mark down these dates in your calendars!

Have you heard that jingle and cheer? It’s the best time of the year, to get your ugly sweaters out of the closet! The WCPC is having our very first ugly sweater contest. All you have to do is take a picture of your store bought or handmade sweater by December 26th and send it in along with your name to wcpcofficers@gmail.com. Voting will take place on Facebook. The winner will get a prize! Pet entries are also welcome.

The WCPC is having our annual holiday donation drive. This year, the chosen non-profit organization is called Caitlin’s Smiles. Caitlin’s Smiles is based in Harrisburg, PA, where they deliver arts and crafts kits to children facing chronic or life-threatening illnesses. Any item bought on the WCPC’s Amazon list will be shipped directly to Caitlin’s Smiles. If you’d like to donate, please visit this link.

Be sure to come to our next general meeting on January 28, 2020 at 8:30 PM EST for our book review of Maybe You Should Talk to Someone with New York Times bestselling author, Lori Gottlieb. Additionally, mental health case manager, Katie Marshall will speak at the end of the meeting.

In this issue of Mind over Matters, you will find a new section titled “Anonymous Contributor”, where writers can submit pieces while staying anonymous.
December 23, 2019 @ 1:00 PM - 4:15 PM EST
Introduction to Forensic Assessment (3 CE's)
Presenter: David Shapiro, Ph.D.

This webinar will focus on ethical issues involved in informed consent, traditional psychological testing, malingering testing, and trauma assessments. As well as a discussion on the difference between forensic and clinical assessment. **Price: $59.00**

To register, please click this [link](#).

January 10, 2020 @ 10:00 AM - 1:15 PM EST
Clinical Work With Older Adults (3 CE's)
Presenter: Heather Hartman-Hall, Ph.D.

If you have an interest in working with older adults in the future, then this webinar might be the perfect fit for you! Some topics that will be described are normal aging vs mental illness in older adults, cultural and treatment considerations, dementia, delirium, and intervention strategies. **Price: $59.00**

To register, please click this [link](#).

January 14-15, 2020 11AM - 7:30 PM EST
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Suicide Prevention Training via Zoom (13.5 CE's)
Presenter: Lisa French, Sharon Birman, and Marjorie Weinstock

This two-day webinar will train attendees in cognitive-behavioral therapy, while also covering treatment of suicidal ideation, the Self-Directed Violence Classification System (SDVCS), the epidemiology of suicide in the military/veteran community and in the civilian population. The registration deadline is January 7, 2020. **Price: $45.00**

To register, please click this [link](#).

January 20, 2020 @ 11:00 AM - 1:15 PM EST
The Essential Ingredients Needed in Becoming A Play Therapist (3 CE's)
Presenter: Erin Dugan, Ph.D.

This webinar will help attendees gain more of an understanding on the main goals, basic principles, and history of play therapy. The various play therapy materials, directive and non-directive approaches, useful techniques, and fundamental objectives will be discussed. **Price: $59.00**

To register, please click this [link](#).
Someone is tapping their pen and I can hear people whispering behind me. I’m fidgeting in my seat; my legs are bouncing up and down under my desk. There is a car alarm going off outside and I can hear music playing a few classrooms over. “Lindsay, can you repeat to me what I just said for the class?” Everyone looks at me, my face turns bright red, and I say nothing. I wasn’t paying attention, but, how could I? There is so much going on around me! After a few seconds of awkward silence and discreet snickering from my peers, the teacher continues her lecture.

When I tell people that I have ADHD, a lot of them immediately tell me how lucky I am that I am able to take the “ultimate study drug” on a regular basis. Some people have even gone as far as to tell me I have an “unfair advantage” over other students. I’ve heard every possible insult, and at times it has truly affected my self-esteem to the point that I’ve questioned my diagnosis altogether. Am I just too stupid to understand the material? Why can’t I just pay attention to the teacher like everyone else? These questions led me on a path to self-discovery, a path to understand what was going on in my brain that made my experiences different than everyone else’s.

ADHD, which is short for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, is a disorder that is characterized by expressions of inattention, overactivity, and impulsiveness that lead to an impairment in social or academic functioning (Konrad & Eickhoff, 2010). For me, this meant I had trouble paying attention to tasks that require long durations of concentration along with a difficulty sitting still for long periods of time. After many psychiatrist visits along with a few trips to a specialized doctor in adolescent ADHD, my diagnosis was confirmed. I was placed on Adderall.

So, what does ADHD do to the brain that causes these behaviors? And how does a stimulant like Adderall help someone who is experiencing hyperactive symptoms? A primary explanation to these symptoms lies in the neurotransmitters that flow to and from the frontal lobes in the brain. Neurotransmitters such as dopamine and GABA are responsible for functions such as motivation, attention, planning, movement, and mood regulation (Sue et al., 2016). In those suffering from ADHD, however, there is a reduction in the number of these neurotransmitters in the frontal cortex, which leads to the behavioral impulses and inattentiveness associated with ADHD. Furthermore, stimulant medications such as Ritalin and Adderall work to increase neurological stimulation in the frontal cortex, thereby increasing attention and decreasing impulsiveness back to normal limits (Sue et al., 2016).

I continue to have trouble concentrating in structured environments, but my symptoms have greatly improved since starting my medication. I am not “stupid” by any means, and I no longer allow criticism to affect my self-esteem. Those who are medicated for ADHD do not have an “unfair advantage” because their brains naturally are deprived of neurotransmitters necessary for concentration; medication simply attempts to normalize these levels. If you happen to know someone who is suffering from ADHD, do not criticize them or ridicule them, as they are likely well-aware of their symptoms and behaviors already. Instead, offer to help them go over any notes that they may have missed during class or give them a tap on the shoulder when you notice them spacing out in the middle of a lecture. It is a long, frustrating process to retrain the mind to be more attentive and focused, but by supporting those around you, it will make a big impact on those who need it most.
Underneath by Kayla Gaudin

On the outside I am a United States Marine, a female Marine at that. The reason that being a female Marine is significant is because there are so few of us. You must be tough not only physically but mentally and relentless not only mentally, but physically. It takes so much mental toughness to endure being away from home, going to boot camp for 3 months, and having a limited connection to family. I was able to endure all of those things and become a Marine, because I had what it takes. However, do you know what it doesn’t take to be a Marine? Anxiety. Do you want to know what I have struggled to cope with over the past 6 years? Anxiety.

To those who know me I am strong, dedicated, positive, and outgoing. While it is true that I am all of these things, there is one thing that I have kept pretty good under wraps. That one thing is that I struggle with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD). As Marines, it is not viewed as “tough” to struggle with Depression or Anxiety, and therefore many people keep it hidden and never seek treatment or therapy. The unfortunate result of this is that they feel hopeless and lonely, and they may even contemplate taking their own life. I have seen it far too many times, and I want it to stop. No, I don’t want people to stop having Depression or Anxiety because sometimes you can’t control it, but what I do want to stop is the feeling or perception that people, not just Marines, need to hide it. “GAD affects 6.8 million adults, or 3.1% of the U.S population.” (ADAA, n.d.). This number may very well be so much higher due to individuals not reporting or seeking help for their symptoms.

There is absolutely no shame in seeking help, treatment, therapy, or relief alike. I used to be embarrassed about how much I worried about things, and the fact that I couldn’t control it made it worse because that meant there was no quick solution. I struggled, and when I say struggled I mean struggled, for 5 years before I was finally honest with myself. It took me 5 years of feeling alone, constantly worrying, having random panic attacks, before I made an appointment with my physician. I was honest with them and received the diagnosis of GAD that same visit. I couldn’t help but feel relief afterwards, because having the diagnosis meant that I wasn’t crazy. It meant that I could now help myself and find ways to control it. I was given medication which helped tremendously, paired that with therapy, and the result was mind-boggling.

These things actually worked. I had spent so long dwelling on the fact that I would be struggling forever, that I didn’t give much thought to taking medication. I had tried therapy by itself, it helped partially but not fully. The stigma around medication is getting better, but it is still viewed as unnecessary by many. At first, I didn’t want to take medication because that meant that it was real. It meant that I really had anxiety and I really couldn’t handle it by myself, and that bothered me. After a lot of talking with a therapist and a
select few family members, I realized that sometimes you just can’t handle everything on your own. I then researched medication and what it actually did, how it worked, and then it all made sense to me.

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are the usual medication of choice by doctors for treating anxiety and depression. SSRIs work by increasing the levels of serotonin in the brain. “SSRIs block the reabsorption (reuptake) of serotonin into neurons. This makes more serotonin available to improve transmission of messages between neurons.” (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2019). Learning that it was my brain that was to blame, and not me specifically, helped me deal with my diagnosis and accept it.

Accepting having GAD also meant accepting myself. This may have been more challenging that anything I had endured in the past 5 years. Accepting my faults and looking at them as what makes me unique was hard, but I did it. I am still learning everyday how to better manage my anxiety, whether it’s yoga, meditation, running, etc. Never stop growing and learning new ways to accept yourself. Most importantly though, never be ashamed of what you struggle with. On the outside I am still the tough, strong, dedicated, and positive Marine that everyone knows me as, but on the inside I have GAD and daily struggles, but now I accept them and look at them as a challenge to overcome that day. If I can overcome the challenge, you can also overcome it, because that is all it is: a challenge. Anxiety and depression are not solid brick walls that we cannot go through, but they are challenges that we can figure out and conquer. If you have anxiety, depression, both, or any other mental illness, don’t ever think it means you can’t be happy and get through it. Just be patient, seek treatment, do your research, and keep an open mind and soul. Sometimes you have to weather the storm before you enjoy the sunset.
Anonymous Contributor:

Rapid-Cycling Bipolar by Fearless

I am a woman, but I could be anyone. A child, a man, a runaway teenager… I’ve been living long enough with a rapid-cycling bipolar husband, to know the eternal bashing of my psyche. I prepare myself for the battle. I always know it’s coming. I mark it on my calendar. Beautiful Full Moon that cycles through human minds changes thought patterns, behaviors, and life itself on earth. If tides, planting cycles, light and darkness are altered, so is the complex mind of a rapid-cycling bipolar person. I describe it as a non-stop rollercoaster. Sleep is an enemy, restlessness is a virtue, fighting is an everyday goal. Specks of narcissism throughout their behavior. Never ever satisfied, always looking, but never finding happiness. Capable of destroying you mentally, emotionally, and in some cases physically. Daily life is a Stratego game. If you ever played one, you’d know what I mean. My armor is on at all times. I’ve become an expert at facial recognition, speech patterns, physical movements, thought process, his feelings of love and hatred- within a split second of time. At his lowest point, his music preference is a dead giveaway. How do you recognize bipolar behavior? It starts showing itself slowly. Anger out of nowhere to which one shrugs off as a bad day at work, perhaps woke up on the wrong side of the bed. Not enough sleep so they are always grumpy. But wait.. You are always miserable. Anger is your joy. The day is not over without a fight or an argument about something trivial. Volcanic rages that you hope will go dormant as he ages, but in a way it doesn’t slow him down, though it does take a lot of energy out of him. And in a rapid-cycling bipolar person, the built-in process starts all over again. And then you realize that from the moment they wake up, till the moment they “finally” fall asleep you must be on guard of: your senses, your laughter, your smiles, your joy, your children, your pets, and most of all your time. You are forever catering to an adult who never wanted to grow up. I suspected something was wrong when I saw his childhood pictures and not in any one of them was he ever smiling. An angry child unbeknownst to his parents. A bully in school, overachiever in sports, socially active, yet emotionally repressed. Dual parental umbilical cords not cut on time. Creatively verbally abusive. I’ve been chipping away at the weightless tree on his shoulder for years. But, branches do grow back sometimes in another direction. I don’t walk on eggshells anymore. My heart is bigger than I thought it was for I am sharing this with you, who will never know who I am. Faceless, strong, resilient, and prayerful. It is best that you recognize him wherever you go. They are real people who look just like you and me. Rollercoasting their life away, never fully realizing the gravity of their words, actions, and mentality. I fear no one, but if you ever encounter and now know to recognize a rapid-cycling bipolar person, do not try to be a hero. Exit, leave, and don’t look back. They will never change. See the world, aware that every one of us in it, has their brain wired differently. Be happy. Be free.
The Pursuit of Joy and The Power of Incrementalism by Miguel Moyano

On the May issue of Mind Over Matters, I discussed happiness. Specifically how certain activities in the name of the pursuit of happiness lead to dissatisfaction. I wrote about the diminishing returns of happiness in order to explain why happiness feels elusive. I described why happiness dissipates with time, frequency of experiences, and availability of material resources. My conclusion is that happiness-seeking activities often involve pleasurable actions. I proposed that we seek to achieve joy. Joy is sustained happiness that can be earned by developing a lifestyle that routinely prioritizes activities that provide daily moderate-high levels of satisfaction. What are these activities? The answer is not sexy, considering that it is not proposed to achieve joy quickly. Instead, it is based on a collection of activities and practices that harness the power of incrementalism.

In this article, I will discuss how to switch from the pursuit of happiness to joy. But first, I want to go over some of the barriers to joy. I will then review some evidence-based ways to sustain joy as well as the philosophical and spiritual pillars of joy.

Capitalism and free-market economies promised the public the availability of sufficient resources that are important to happiness (i.e., better shelter, clothes, electricity for heating and cooling, plumbing, food, and potable water). We can all find a measurement of happiness and satisfaction by having our minimum needs exceeded. We can observe in the data that we are working slightly more (0.65%) than in 2013 (American Time Use Survey, 2018). Still, thanks to improvements in household technologies (i.e., robotic vacuum cleaners or dishwashers), our leisure time is greater and more enjoyable than four decades ago. Overall, we are having an abundance of material success, working slightly more, which increases income and adds household resources, and have more time for leisure activities. So, why are death and despair increasing? Why are people reporting less happiness and more physical and mental exhaustion?

In 2019, our quality of life and standards of living (in terms of medical technology, life spans, declining violence rates and wars, and increasing economic opportunities) far exceed those of our fellow humans 100 years ago. Despite this, we are experiencing an epidemic in anxiety, depression, addiction, overdoses, cirrhosis of the liver caused by alcoholism, and suicides. The Center for Disease Control Prevention (CDC) reported that in 2017, suicide was the second leading cause of death in teens. Childhood suicides have been creeping up in the data every year.

Aaron Edelheit, the author of the book The Hard Break: The Case for a 24/6 Lifestyle, suggests that we pay close attention to how we are working and how we are spending our leisure time. According to Mr. Edelheit, "It's not so much that we're working more hours, per se, but it's that we're constantly connected.
That's one of the biggest problems. We're constantly…on-call." We are no longer just connected to a phone or an email like some professionals in the 90s. It is that our circle of connectivity has expanded from our work colleagues, close friends, and immediate family members to virtually every person we know. Edelheit concluded that "you're basically on-call to every business contact and every social contact that you've almost ever met through Facebook, Twitter, email, or Slack. Everyone can reach you at any time. Our brains are addicted”.

Addicted to what? Dopamine. “We’re getting so much of it all the time, we end up just wanting more and more, so activities that used to be pleasurable now aren’t. Frequent stimulation of dopamine gets the brain’s baseline higher.” said James Sinka (Bowles, 2019). Similarly, that idea runs parallel with the thesis of Dr. Daniel Z. Lieberman and author Michael Long in their book *The Molecule of More*. Our newest and greatest technologies are designed to boost dopamine so we stay connected longer (think of infinity scrolling enabled sites like Facebook or Amazon).

This level of connectivity and dopamine production impacts people's perceptions of reality and expectations. No longer can kids compete against their neighbors for relative or marginal success. No longer can adults view their efforts against the efforts of people from similar socioeconomics. There will always be an Elon Musk in our smart devices, reminding us that our efforts aren't that great or even worst, trivial. This can make young people insecure and less comfortable with their aspirations.

The research on this matter is detailed. This level of constant connectivity is forcing our brains to gather increasing amounts of information and is draining us. The solution is often found in the growing self-help industry because people can't afford professional care or because they assess that their issues do not require assistance from mental health professionals.

For Svend Brinkmann, the self-help literature is often misguided. Brinkmann thinks that our society is no longer doing activities because they are right. In an interview, he said, "We no longer do X because X is intrinsically valuable." What he means is that, when people want to workout after New Year's Day, they are doing it not because it is the right thing to do but because we want to look good to feel good. Brinkmann adds that "We do X to achieve Y, and then we do Y to achieve Z...Everything has become...a stepping stone to something else. We never really experience intrinsic meaning, or if we do, we are constantly in doubt whether it's okay, whether we're wasting our time, because shouldn't we be doing something useful?"

In the pursuit of happiness, we've lost sight of the intrinsically valuable activities or practices that we can do daily to gain joy. We should do Yoga simply because it is a healthy activity and let the byproduct of looking good to be secondary. We should engage in meditation because it is great for our minds, not because it is fashionable nowadays. This transactional approach makes the pursuit of happiness stressful and can undoubtedly make some anxious about doing things and seeing results. This can lead to frustration and in
extreme cases, despair. It can foster a climate of envy, often skewed by images in social media. All of these are barriers to joy. They even make the pursuit of happiness or joy, less enjoyable in itself triggering a vicious cycle.

There is an overwhelming amount of scientific research that concludes that sustaining happiness or joy is achievable, but it will take effort and grit. The first scientific recommendation is to exercise. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find anything bad about exercise. Physical activity is not about improving the looks of the body, it is to experience improvement in the quality of life, health, energy, and mood. Working out doesn't have to be a strenuous session of weight lifting or Zumba. It can be as simple as an outdoor walk in nature. Despite the small investment and returns of physical activity, overall, Americans are doing fewer sports, outdoor recreational activities, and exercise (American Time Use Survey, 2018). In contrast, Americans are spending more time watching television at a rate of 8%, higher than 14 years ago. A significant difference to the less than 1% increase in hours worked during the same period. According to Nicolau and Barker (2019), production of scripted television shows has skyrocketed by 129% since 2010. The supply of television and streaming shows will continue to increase due to strong consumer demand. Both authors conclude that “the trend is set to deepen, as groups like AT&T…Disney, Apple, and Comcast are launching new streaming services”.

Scientific research also places a strong emphasis on meditation. There is a wealth of studies that conclude that meditation can strengthen our minds, improve connections in our brain, and reduce brain activity during stressful situations (Myers & Dewall, 2015). Science also recommends nature and even massage therapy as healthy relaxation alternatives. Faith-based activities are also highly encouraged by empirical studies. This is because it promotes healthy behavior, self-control, moderation, and social support (Myers & Dewall, 2015). Science also strengthens the argument that eating healthy, smoking cessation, sleeping well, and abstention from drug use can make it possible to feel better consistently. Personal finances also play a role. Most of us are aware that money problems equal stress, anxiety, restlessness, and sleepless nights. Ensuring that we have adequate savings and retirement can reduce anxiety, help us feel secure and reduce uncertainty about the future.

Interestingly, these evidence-based recommendations are often following the teachings of philosophers, religions across the globe, and spiritual leaders. The converging of science and philosophy is the most exciting and promising aspect of sustaining happiness. Religious leaders agree with science and vice versa. They also add wisdom and unmeasurable variables that science is unable to quantify.

In The Book of Joy, the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu offer us the pillars of Joy. For these two spiritual leaders, humility (a combination of humbleness and modesty), humor, acceptance, gratitude, and generosity can lead us in the path of joy. Other philosophers and spiritual leaders alike, point
to a more complex idea for the meaning of joy. Living a meaningful life and how to practice meaning is vastly essential to joy. But the question of purpose is challenging and beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, we should recognize that this could be the single prerequisite to joy.

How can we switch from happiness to joy? I am convinced that it is in small but incremental lifestyle modifications. We know what the foundation of a joyful life is social support, healthy relationships, exercise, meditation, dieting, nature, sleep hygiene, financial prudence, and so on. I also want to make room for community, volunteerism, and genuine love and affection in romantic partnerships. Like a brick wall, these form the first layer. The additional layers of the brick wall would have to be laid one by one.

We have often heard these recommendations from a variety of sources. But, what is imperative to understand is that we cannot find happiness if we only pursue one area. To achieve joy, we must bundle all of the recommendations and build a lifestyle around those recommendations. The power of incrementalism can allow us to make small corrections each day. We can imagine improvements as placing individual bricks. Each time we complete a quick workout or reduce the amount of junk food consumed weekly - even if it's by 1%, we inched our way closer to joy. If we make small improvements of 1%, such as saving 1% more weekly or reducing caloric intake by 1%, after a year, we have improved by more than 50%. Therefore, making small lifestyle modifications can lead us to the path of joy. But, we have to make it part of our lifestyle because repetition leads to habit-forming. Joy is not a sprinters race; it is like a marathon. Joy is a holistic endeavor. To conclude, I would like to quote the American entrepreneur Gary Vaynerchuk - "Slow and steady wins the race."
From all the WCPC executive board members, Happy Holidays and have a wonderful winter break!

Thank you to all of our contributing writers! See you in February for our next issue!
References


