



INEZ COSTANZO, LCSW-C, BCD
INDIVIDUAL AND COUPLES THERAPY
ADHD COACHING
(301) 871-5408

DEANA ALBERT, LCSW-C
INDIVIDUAL, GROUP AND COUPLES THERAPY
301-871-4492

Coaching for ADHD

Some of our therapy patients may have noticed that I am doing ADHD Coaching and wondered what that means. Individuals with ADHD tend to have major difficulties with organization and time management. They may struggle getting started on a project or following it through to the end. Tasks that are time sensitive, such as paying bills or work projects on deadline, may feel impossible. In coaching sessions the client and I work together to develop strategies for handling these and other problems stemming from ADHD, not just generic strategies, but ones specific to the client's personality and style. By taking into account the specific individual's temperament and strengths we are more likely to put in place strategies that will really work.

Some people with ADHD have always had problems concentrating, completing tasks, etc. Still others have always managed in spite of undiagnosed ADHD but suddenly find themselves in difficulty because of a change in their home or work environment. The change can be a new job or a new task at work, maybe one that requires more attention to detail than has previously been required. Maybe there is suddenly an expectation that the person work on several projects at once. Rising to the level of supervisor may create a crisis because the employee is required to stay on top of the work of several other people, to maintain focus in several directions at once. A job that requires planning ahead can also be a problem, as can one in which good time management is a must.

The arrival of a child may be the straw that breaks the camel's back, especially if a woman is suddenly required to parent and hold down a job. Or a Mom may do fine when the kids first enter the family, but feel completely out of control when she has to start interacting with the school, getting children there on time, staying on top of assignments, keeping abreast of all the forms the school requires the parents read, fill out or sign. The difficulties are worse if she has children in different schools or if one or more of the children also struggles with ADHD. And it isn't just dealing with the school that becomes a problem. As she struggles to keep up with the demands there, she will find herself more disorganized or forgetful at work or regarding other household tasks.

As a coach I help clients create new coping strategies then help them tweak the strategies that don't work, or come up with new ones. Staying in regular contact, through face-to-

Interesting Tidbits

Many of the drugs for depression and anxiety cause dry mouth. In case the doctor forgot to mention it, that dry mouth makes you much more susceptible to cavities. So if you want to avoid problems, cut down on the sweets and drink lots of water.

Women should also be aware that some of these drugs interfere with the action of the birth control pill. If you are using oral contraception be sure to ask the pharmacist any time you start on a new medication if it will make the pill ineffective. It is a good idea to do this with all prescriptions, including antibiotics.



The FDA recently gave preliminary approval to a device known as a vagus nerve stimulator for the treatment of intractable depression, depression that cannot be effectively treated with medications. The vagus nerve stimulator is similar to a pacemaker and is surgically implanted on the left side of the chest below the collarbone. There are wires extending from the main piece which extend around the vagus nerve in the neck. It is set to send an electrical impulse to the nerve at regular intervals and it is the stimulation of the vagus nerve which positively affects the depression. The device has been in use for epilepsy since the late nineties. It was through observation of epileptics who had had the device implanted that investigators realized it might be helpful in treating depression. Final approval is expected in May, 2005.



We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.

G.B. Shaw

face meetings and/or e-mail, helps the client to stay on track the same way working with a personal trainer helps some individuals to continue with a work-out routine. We will stray into more generic life-coaching, working on career change, supervisor problems, even parenting issues, but always with an awareness of how the issue is affected by ADHD.

A therapist generally does not coach her therapy clients. The processes of therapy and coaching are different and trying to switch between them can be confusing. I do find however, that being a therapist informs my coaching. As a therapist I have studied how people learn in order to help me understand what approaches might be most helpful for patients; this is a skill that applies directly to coaching. Also, I am trained to recognize depression and anxiety so if a coaching client's inability to focus is from depression rather than ADHD, I am able to discern that and respond accordingly.

I am finding coaching to be an exciting twist on the therapeutic work I have done for almost thirty years. It is helping to keep me fresh as a therapist and I am greatly enjoying the creative problem-solving that is the essence of coaching.

Clients of Deana who would like to try coaching should give me a call. If you have a friend or family member whom you think would benefit from coaching, please share this newsletter with them or give them my number. As a therapist my goal has always been to assist people in finding happier, more satisfying lives; coaching is another way I am able to do that.

Inez Costanzo, LCSW-C, BCD



News Flash!

A recent study found that when we are under stress our metabolism slows down so that even if we do not change our eating or exercise habits, we will gain weight. This is only one study but it certainly does give one pause. Is it possible that anxious individuals gain weight not only because of so-called nervous eating, but because they actually have slower metabolisms than people who are less anxious or do not have as much stress in their lives? At the very least, does it mean that some of those accusations the overweight have heard from doctors over the years regarding their eating habits may have been as unfair as patients have always felt? Definitely “food” for thought.



Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.

Robert Louis Stevenson

“Natural” Remedies — Still Drugs

There are many “natural” remedies which are effective in the treatment of medical, including psychiatric, problems. For example, fish oil is thought to be helpful against depression, as is St. John's Wort. But remember, just because these are “natural” substances does not mean they are not also drugs. In fact, in some European countries such supplements are controlled in the same way as prescription drugs are in this country.

There are three things to keep in mind if you are considering taking natural substances for relief of physical or psychiatric problems. First, they interact with prescription drugs just as prescription drugs interact with each other, so it is essential to check with your doctor before starting to take supplements as well as to tell any new doctor which supplements you take so he can prescribe new medications appropriately. St. John's Wort, so highly touted for the relief of depression, turns out to have more problematic interactions with other drugs than the most commonly prescribed anti-depressants. And many supplements act as blood thinners so taking them while also taking aspirin, ibuprofen, or prescription blood thinners, as well as taking multiple such supplements, can lead to serious bleeding problems.

The second issue with supplements is that there is less research done on them by pharmaceutical companies because that is not where the money is. As a result, less is known, in most cases, about side-effect profiles and potential long-term damage from such substances. Because of the demand for natural remedies, there is more research occurring than ever before but in very few instances does our knowledge about such remedies match our knowledge about drugs that are FDA-approved. And we know that even with lots of study and FDA approval, many problems with drugs are discovered only after they have been on the market for some time.

Thirdly, because the FDA does not have jurisdiction over supplements, there is also no quality control. Testing of various supplements has often shown that the amount of the active substance purported to be in any given pill or capsule is inaccurate, with pills sometimes having only traces of the substance and sometimes having many times the amount listed. There is also a lack of quality assurance regarding what other substances may be contained in tablets in addition to the active ingredient.

None of this means you should not consider supplements. But be cautious. Check the remedy out with your doctor; do your own web search on what information has been gathered regarding side effects and interactions, and buy only from well-established companies. This last is not a guarantee of quality but certainly improves the odds that you are getting what you pay for. Some nutritionists also sell supplements made by companies they have come to trust so buying from your nutritionist may also be a safer avenue of acquiring these natural treatments. When it comes to your health, it is important to be an informed consumer.

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