



NEW Membership Level & Privileges:

Members have been asking and we are listening. We are pleased to announce we have added a new membership level: the \$100 Pearl level will have all the benefits of the Ruby level, plus listing in the Vista Hill Annual Donor Report and an invitation to "Coffee & Conversation" starting in 2008 (see details in story on page 3).

Recommended Reading

Retire Smart, Retire Happy: Finding Your True Path in Life
By Nancy K. Schlossberg

Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls

Odd Girl Speaks Out: Girls Write about Bullies, Cliques, Popularity, and Jealousy
By Rachel Simmons

Children's Books:

The Autism Acceptance Book: Being a Friend to Someone With Autism

The Special Needs Acceptance Book: Being a Friend to Someone with Special Needs.
By Ellen Sabin



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WOMEN'S COUNCIL

On Mental Health

Volume 8 No. 1

A WOMEN'S COUNCIL / VISTA HILL FOUNDATION PUBLICATION

WINTER 2008

TRAUMA AND STRESS:

Reflections After the California Fires

Linda Hirshberg, Ph.D

There is little question that residents of the “Golden State” are often subject to events that produce trauma and stress. If it were not for all of the benefits of living in a relatively perfect climate, surrounded by beauty, with substantial job opportunities, a diverse population, and good public universities, many California residents would choose to avoid the earthquakes, floods and fires that can be a part of the yearly climate cycle in this area. Those who deal regularly with these kinds of events have jobs that require them to protect and assist the public. Obvious examples are police officers, firefighters, and emergency room nurses and doctors. However, the Cedar Fire of four years ago, and the most recent devastation that resulted in many families having to evacuate (and/or lose) their homes from the same threat are reminders that trauma can happen to any of us. In fact, this is part of life, regardless of where one resides or the nature of one’s profession. Therefore, reflecting on what trauma is, how it impacts us, and what we can do about it is something that can benefit us all.

Dictionary definitions of trauma commonly address two areas. One refers to significant, unexpected, sudden and substantial physical injury; the other describes shocking events that create psychological distress with a lasting mental impact. An episode can be confined to one of these two arenas or be a combination of both. Events that have been associated with trauma include, but are not limited to, assaults, motor vehicle accidents, war and torture, or acts of nature like our most recent experiences.

This article will focus primarily on the psychological impact of trauma, but the comments offered are applicable to both. Each person’s reaction to trauma needs to be viewed individually. There is no universal response. As a consequence, there is no single prescription either. There are many ways to deal with these events, and the decisions any individual or family makes need to be respected.

Mission Statement

As women of today we want to improve the lives of women of tomorrow by increasing awareness and knowledge of mental health issues. We wish to remove the stigma of mental illness by educating the public. It is also our goal to encourage women through a holistic approach to mental health care which acknowledges everyone’s physical, mental, and spiritual needs.

To Become A Member

For information and to receive a membership brochure, please call Rachel Peniche at 858-514-5153, or visit our website at www.vistahill.org.

Just Between Friends is published twice a year by the Friends of Vista Hill Foundation, 8787 Complex Drive, Suite 200, San Diego, CA 92123.

The Vista Hill Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit system dedicated to providing excellence in behavioral health care for the people of San Diego County.



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Membership Benefits

All memberships are renewable on a yearly basis. Enjoy Women's Council on Mental Health (WCMH) programs at a reduced rate and support Vista Hill. Join today!

\$50 Ruby Level

- 20% discount on tickets to WCMH programs and Q&A forums featuring nationally-recognized experts, authors and celebrities
- Subscription to bi-annual newsletter
- A distinctive and elegant goldtone membership pin

\$100 Pearl Level-New!

- Invitation to complimentary "Coffee & Conversation" gatherings
- Listing in Vista Hill's Annual Donor Report
- All Ruby Level benefits

\$250 Sapphire Level

- Preferred seating at all programs
- Invitation to special receptions with guest speakers
- All Ruby & Pearl Level benefits

\$500 Emerald Level

- Emerald Member listing in Women's Council event programs
- Invitation to special receptions with guest speakers
- 2 complimentary VIP tickets to programs
- Prominent VIP seating at all programs
- All Ruby & Pearl Level benefits

\$1,000 Diamond Level

- Diamond Member listing in Women's Council event programs
- Invitation to you and your guests to special receptions with guest speakers
- 4 complimentary VIP tickets to programs, with complimentary valet parking
- Prominent VIP seating at all programs
- All Ruby & Pearl Level benefits



Reflections continued from page 1

Knowing what the common reactions to this kind of distress are can be reassuring. Some physical reactions include: feeling tired and fatigued; having headaches, stomach aches, and a decrease in appetite; and experiencing sleep disturbances. Psychological/emotional symptoms related to trauma can consist of shock, disbelief, fear, anger, sadness, shame, guilt, problems with attention and concentration, and a decrease in performance. Although there are people who cope, most have a response that they can identify even if it is just anxiety about how to secure what they need to move on. Therefore, when trauma victims are apprised of common symptoms, assured that most are normal and temporary, and given suggestions about what they can do, they are generally comforted.

There are a few things that seem to help everyone initially. These include practical information such as where to stay, how to get a meal, and what agencies or resources are likely to be the next and/or continuing contact points. Over time, however, other material can be useful. As an example, understanding that the rate of recovery differs from person to person, and that it typically does not happen over night, can minimize the pressure some feel from themselves and/or others to just "get on with it." Additionally, knowing that there are those who want to discuss the event while others prefer to focus on moving ahead so that they can put their difficulties behind them, helps people to remain open to a variety of coping strategies. Following the victim's lead should be the guide.

Friends and relatives can be of assistance in these times if they can listen carefully without providing solutions or suggestions unless asked. Just spending time with victims and providing reassurance that is based in reality can ease the process. Being respectful of the time and space individuals need, tolerating fluctuations in mood, and not taking things too personally can assist with recovery as well.

Human beings are amazingly resilient. Some of us even report feeling stronger as a result of devastating events. There are those, however, who have a tougher road to walk. If one month passes, and progress appears to be limited, a professional evaluation might be indicated. Here, too, though, any avenue selected should be determined by the individual(s) involved in consultation with family and appropriate professionals as needed. While a rosy outcome cannot be promised in all circumstances, improvement is something that can be realized by most of us. That, in itself, is good news.

Psychologist Dr. Hirshberg, now retired, practiced for more than 20 years and still remains active in issues pertaining to mental health. She is a member of the Vista Hill Board of Directors.

Mental Illness and Drug Addiction May Co-occur Due to Disturbance in the Brain

Why do mental illness and drug addiction often go together? New research reveals that this type of dual diagnosis may stem from a common cause: developmental changes in the amygdala, a walnut-shaped part of the brain linked to fear, anxiety and other emotions.

A full report on why these “comorbid” disorders may develop appears in the December *Behavioral Neuroscience*, published by the American Psychological Association (APA).

Dual diagnosis is common yet difficult to treat. Addiction of all types—to nicotine, alcohol and drugs—is often found in people with a wide variety of mental illnesses, including anxiety disorders, unipolar and bipolar depression, schizophrenia, and borderline and other personality disorders. Lead author Andrew

Chambers, MD, cites clinical reports that at least half the people who seek help with addiction or mental-health treatment have co-occurring disorders. Epidemiological data says that from two to five of every 10 anxious or depressed persons, and from four to eight of every 10 people

with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or antisocial personality, also have some type of addiction.

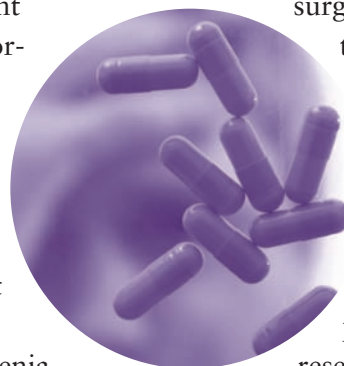
To find the scientific basis for this complex, seemingly intractable pairing, which has in the past been attributed to “self-medication,” Chambers’ team at the Indiana University medical school compared the adult mood- and drug-related behavior of two groups of adult rats: those whose amygdalas were surgically

damaged in infancy and those whose amygdalas were left intact but who underwent a sham surgery, to equalize their treatment.

To improve the effectiveness of treatments for dual diagnosis, Chambers would like to see educators, counselors, physicians, and scientific researchers integrate insights

into both mental health and addiction. Funding the simultaneous treatment of both disorders would also help, he observes, given that “dual-diagnosis cases are the mainstream among these patients, probably because addiction and mental illness are strongly linked by neurobiology.”

(Full text of the article is available from the American Psychological Association Public Affairs Office 202.336.5700 and at <http://www.apa.org/journals/releases/bne12161316.pdf>)



Introducing “Coffee & Conversation”

The Women’s Council on Mental Health is forming a new forum to discuss upcoming Women’s Council events and current mental health issues. We welcome Women’s Council members from the \$100 level up to join us on February 11, 2008 for our inaugural get together for “Coffee & Conversation” at 10:00 am in the Vista Hill Conference Room.

We plan to discuss the summer Women’s Council Lunch and have a roundtable chat about Dr. Perl’s book “Living to 100: Living to your Maximum Potential at Any Age.” Books are currently available at our office for \$18. Please contact Rachel Peniche for more information or to RSVP 858.514.5153 or rpeniche@vistahill.org



Did You Know?

Families of those who suffer extreme traumatic stress can also develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Approximately 9% of those exposed to extreme trauma develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in women is twice that of men, 10% vs. 5%.