



WCTCCA Spring 2014 Newsletter

Are you interested in:

- ⇒ *Connecting with other college counselors?*
- ⇒ *Finding out about the services and support WCTCCA has to offer?*
- ⇒ *Visiting the University of Washington-Tacoma Campus?*

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JOIN US IN TACOMA

*During Commission/Council Meetings
Session of the WSSSC Conference*

WCTCCA Counselor Networking Meeting

Date: Friday May 2nd 9:00am-10:45 am

Location: UW-T at Philip Hall

9:00am Meet in the Lobby of Hotel Murano

9:05am Walk over as a group to Phillip Hall at the University of Washington-Tacoma campus

9:15am Light Refreshments will be served.

9:30am -10:45am WCTCCA Counselors Networking Meeting

We will hear a brief 15min presentation about the programs at UW-T. Then we will have a Networking meeting to discuss the needs of Community & Technical College Counselors. All are welcome.

UW-Tacoma Link to campus Map:

<http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/campus-map/campus-map>



Now Accepting Submission for CCA Newsletter.

If you would like to write an article or submit information for a future newsletter please send them to:

annemarie.solbrack@cptc.edu

2013-2014 WCTCCA Steering Committee

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BITCA Division, Counselor
Seattle Central College

Book Review of Two User Guides For Mental Health Professionals and Their Clients

Your Mental Health: A Layman's Guide to the Psychiatrist's Bible, January 1999, Scribner, 426 pp, 1994 DSM-IV Chair, Dr. Allen Frances, and it's Editor, Dr. Michael First

Caring For The Mind: The Comprehensive Guide to Mental Health, May 1995, Bantam, 811 pp., Drs. Dianne and Robert Hales w/ Introduction by Dr. Allen Frances.

The recently released DSM-V is the first revision in the “psychiatrist’s bible” in 20 years. There is much new material and our realities, experiences and understandings of “normalcies” have given us some surprises. But I would argue that the far larger part we still work with is (rightly or wrongly) intact. I am not a psychiatrist (don’t wannabe either). As such I appreciate works like both of these distilled in clear readership by those very people who craft DSM’s on behalf of the psychiatric community which defines boundaries of “normal” functioning. Let me put it frankly – I have sometimes had my suspicions about where the line on the ground really is on some of those matters . . . so do many of the psychiatric community.

I find both of these two books *Your Mental Health* and *Caring For the Mind* to be very clear, readable and useable – far more so than trying to resolve your practical approach to student situation than twirling the DSM axes. Let me break it down closer – and I admit to opinion from here. They are both highly readable and very accessible. Though considerably bigger, I find *Caring for the Mind* much more valuable page-for-page nicely transitioned from experience descriptive, behavioral checklists, mental processes, treatment methodology and the “personal voices” of self-aware clients. I’ve even found myself reading this volume “casually with interest.”

I found *Your Mental Health*, to be a more quick, readable, translation door to the DSM. I know counselors don’t get paid for breathing but you can afford both of these from Amazon and still not break the free shipping threshold . . . like a buck or two for each. Never mind the new DSM-V – I seriously recommend one of these volumes for your reference. Either is good. I find Hales & Hales the best.

Al Souma M.A.
Faculty/Disability Support Counselor
Seattle Central Community College

Supporting Students With Autoimmune Disorders

The purpose of this article is to help bring to light the severity of a category of medical conditions that appear, at least from my own experience as a Disability Support Counselor at Seattle Central Community College to be on the rise in our student population. Over the past several years an increasing number of students were referred to my office seeking accommodations for complications resulting from autoimmune disorders. An autoimmune disorder is defined as a condition that occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys healthy body organs. The antibodies that normally defend against infection attack the individuals own tissues leaving the body vulnerable to various viral, bacterial or fungal opportunistic infections. Damage occurs in blood vessels, joints, muscles, skin, thyroid gland and pancreas to name a few. There are over 80 different types of autoimmune disorders with women reportedly affected more than men. Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Lyme's disease, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Celiac's Disease, Diabetes Type 1, Crohn's Disease, and Lupus are examples of autoimmune disorders that students have reported that manifest both physical and cognitive symptoms.

During the 2012-13 school calendar four female students came in for assistance within one week of each other. Each sought to arrange various levels of flexibility with instructors as these students attempted to balance the disabling effects of an autoimmune disorder against the demands of their coursework. Two of the four students contracted Lyme's disease; one Crohn's disease, and the other MS. Each student faced different severity of symptoms but all four reported identical concerns with their conditions. These universal concerns centered on the inability to predict when flare ups would occur, how severe the flare up would present, how long the symptoms would last and how quickly they could get back to focusing on their academic priorities. It became immediately clear to me that it may be helpful to offer a weekly support group as a platform for the four students to share their common experiences. In past years I helped organize student support groups around specific disabilities arranging for students to eventually take over and facilitate the groups independently. One such group was a Traumatic Brain Injury support group that met weekly for several years and the other was an Attention Deficit Disorder group that also met weekly for the same time period. The common benefit with support groups is that students often offer each other various levels of informational and emotional support that they may not receive elsewhere on campus. The downfall of student led groups is that student's leave and the membership changes resulting in groups dissolving. In each support group the take-aways outweighed the downside with students generally agreeing the groups were beneficial to most participants. All four students agreed that they would very much welcome an autoimmune support group. We arranged to meet weekly in my office at the end of the 2013 school year and continue to meet up to a year later.

Article continues on next page...

Supporting Students with Autoimmune Disorders *continued from previous page....*

Discussions resulting from this specific support group included a strong agreement that living with an “invisible” disorder or one that cannot be readily detected by another person presents significant challenges. Students report that when it is necessary to explain to an instructor how the disorder affects their academic output they are perceived as not giving the classroom expectations priority and are offered suggestions to simply muscle through the assignments therefore solving the need for flexibility in timed assignments which was the one academic area they were seeking assistance. What is not visible to the general public when it comes to how the illness manifests are symptoms such as extreme fatigue, fevers, general malaise, joint pains and cognitive impairments such as memory loss, concentration, and brain fog. Autoimmune disorders may present co-morbidly with depression, which may or may not be clinically diagnosed, adding one more variable for students to manage.

As our autoimmune support group progressed it was evident that on a day to day basis these students fought to simply get out of bed despite serious physical pain, worried that their instructors would misinterpret their absences as not taking the class seriously, struggled to keep their motivation strong when faced with the reality that their bodies would not cooperate, and stressed over the fact that some quarters meant taking a smaller class load. This impacted financial aid eligibility as well as a lowering of personal expectations for graduating on schedule. As the facilitator of this group I witnessed the emotional toll each student was forced to repeatedly pay as she did her best to maintain personal dignity while being treated with unproven drugs, increased dosages of multiple medications and the ubiquitous side effects that many medications produce. The support group offered informational support in the form of suggesting helpful doctors and clinics, dealing with family members expectations, and other social issues, but I believe at the heart of this support group was the unconditional caring the students expressed for each other in the face of their personal struggles as they listened intently and without interruption to each symptoms, medical interventions, clinical trials and failures, family member involvement or lack of involvement and personal hopes for living a life with minimal interruption from their autoimmune symptoms. I am able to report that the individual accommodation needs of flexibility of assignment due dates worked out favorably for three of the four students. One student, the youngest in the group, dropped out of school because her Lyme symptoms prevented her from getting out of bed most mornings resulting in her missing the first three weeks of fall qtr. We are exploring online alternatives to support her goal of graduating.

The challenge of managing autoimmune symptoms, finding the correct medical regimen, devising the most appropriate explanations to those who need to know, designing reasonable accommodations to meet needs, and navigating ones way through the academic landscape can be daunting. It requires a combination of individual perseverance and guidance from our student services programs.

The Joys and Pains of Being a College Counselor



At last year's WCTCCA Spring Conference Lauren Glickman presented about Self-Care and Resiliency in the Face of Compassion Fatigue. One of her key points is that one way to take care of ourselves is to move from a blame-based perspective to a focus on personal responsibility.

One of the exercises she had participants to was to list all of the things that are stressful about being a college counselor and then to list all of the reasons why we chose to become counselors. Her point is that the pains of what we are doing are also directly connected to the joys and that you can't have one without the other. Below is the list that the conference participants came up with identifying both the joys and the pains we experience as college counselors.

Counseling Pains

Counseling Joys

<p>Powerlessness, can't take the pain away</p> <p>Never be finished (like throwing the starfish back in the water, there are many more needing help)</p> <p>Not being valued by administrations or personal support system</p> <p>Resources are non-existent, scarce</p> <p>When student's disappointment when they don't or can't achieve their dream</p> <p>Recognizing limitations of my influence</p> <p>Working harder than the student</p> <p>Self-critical</p> <p>Get attached to outcomes</p> <p>Loss and grief</p> <p>Not enough support</p> <p>Not at the table for decision-making</p> <p>Stories – how awful people can be to each other</p> <p>More fear on college campuses</p> <p>Violence on campus and counselor's role/responsibility</p> <p>Expectations about what counseling can accomplish (fix it)</p> <p>College politics – detracts from focus on students</p> <p>Focus on \$bottom line</p> <p>Not enough time to do it all</p> <p>Constant changing of technology</p>	<p>Powerful relationship</p> <p>Appreciation from individual helped</p> <p>Large impact – change trickles to family</p> <p>Feeling valued by co-workers, administrators and students</p> <p>Being a positive influence in people's lives – tailwind</p> <p>Help people recognize and get out of victim role</p> <p>They take their own steps</p> <p>Growth—watching progression</p> <p>Meeting student's families</p> <p>Positive element during time of transition</p> <p>Help see opportunities</p> <p>Insight – create change</p> <p>Going the extra mile</p> <p>Mentoring other counselors</p> <p>Learning something new</p> <p>Nice environment—great people, supportive co-workers</p> <p>Grateful to be a part of a college student's life—they chose me</p> <p>Laughing</p> <p>Help see opportunities</p> <p>Not giving up—great results</p> <p>Pursuing dreams</p> <p>Students changing mindsets</p> <p>Graduation</p> <p>Variety of student we work with</p>
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WCTCCA Membership Fees Are Now Due for 2013-2014

Membership Dues are due each *Fall Quarter* and are good for one academic year:
September through August.

WCTCCA is the only professional association of community college counselors in Washington State. Full membership in WCTCCA is a very reasonable \$30 per academic year and is tax-deductible. Student membership is \$20 per year. Members receive a reduced rate for the annual WCTCCA Spring Conference.

Washington Community and Technical Colleges Counseling Association (WCTCCA)

Membership Application 2013-2014

Name (First, Last) _____ [] Counselor \$30 [] Student \$20

Institution _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Payment Type () Personal Check (check # _____) () Institutional Check

Please keep a copy of this completed form for your records.

Full members are voting members who have paid the annual dues and who: have been employed as a counseling faculty member by a Washington State community or technical college within the past two years and either have earned at least a Masters degree in a field which included a counseling practicum or have worked for at least two years as a counseling faculty member.

Student members: are non-voting members and pay a reduced fee of \$20 a year. Student members must be enrolled in a graduate level counseling program at an accredited college or university.

Make Payment to: WCTCCA Mail Payment and Completed Membership Form To:

Margaret Vlahos, Counselor
Whatcom Community College
237 Kellogg Rd.
Bellingham, WA 98226

Join Our List Serve



Members are encouraged to register with Yahoo groups and join our WCTCCA listserv. This is a great way to connect with your colleagues across the state.

To sign up go to: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/WCTCCA/>

Check out our Website: www.wctcca.com



We have posted links to useful websites, forms and articles and hope to continuing update the information.