

## Time to Learn Something New?

### Can happiness be learned?

Yes, research findings in positive psychology suggest that 40% of our happiness is a result of habits, behaviors, and thought processes that are learned skills. Sonya Lyubomirsky summarizes research in positive psychology in the book "The How of Happiness." In the book, she outlines specific daily activities leading to greater happiness. We first need to accept that happiness does not stem solely from lucky or unlucky events in our lives. Research actually shows that only about 10% of our life satisfaction stems from life circumstances. Many people also confuse happiness with pleasure or immediate gratification. While pleasure in life can and should be appreciated, people who possess happiness skills are able to identify and pursue purposeful long-term goals.

The ability to be "reasonably optimistic" in pursuing our goals, building relationships, and coping with life adversity are crucial happiness skills. Research in positive psychology reveals that "happiness activities" that increase optimism can impact our mood, energy, and life satisfaction. For example, thinking about happy life experiences for only 8 minutes per day can lead to lasting increases in life satisfaction. As you approach a change in your life or a new situation, try the "best possible self" happiness exercise by writing down a detailed description of the best possible outcome that you can picture if everything goes as well as it possibly could.

Happiness practices such as those outlined in Lyubomirsky's book can be explored further in a group program offered this fall by Dr. Sherry Bassi. Details are on page 2 of this newsletter.

### Can a balanced diet help with learning?

Yes, there is scientific evidence that nutrition can play a role in helping out mood and enhancing our cognitive abilities. One nutrient that has been studied extensively is omega-3 fatty acids, found in salmon, walnuts, and in oils such as flaxseed, canola, and soy. Dietary deficiency of omega-3 fatty acids has been associated with increased risks of mood problems, ADHD, and learning problems. For example, in a study in Australia, school age children receiving a dietary supplement, including omega-3 fatty acids, showed improved school performance. Many studies have also found that omega-3 fatty acids can play a role in recovery from mood problems.

The simplest advice is to eat at least 2 servings of seafood per week. But if you want to make sure you're getting enough omega-3 fats, strive for between 1/2 to 1 gram (500-1000mg) per day. As you take steps to reduce stress and achieve greater balance in life, consider a nutrition consultation from ClearSpring's newest healthcare provider, Tammy Cook, who is a registered dietitian.

"Life is my college. May I graduate well, and earn some honors!"

-Louisa May Alcott

### Profile: Tammy Cook, R.D.

My name is Tammy Cook. I am a registered, licensed dietitian. I specialize in helping people with eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia, and binge/emotional eating), body image problems, sports nutrition, weight management, diabetes, high cholesterol, and various gastrointestinal disorders. I work with children, teens, and adults.

I completed my graduate work at St. Louis University and have been in practice for almost 18 years. In the past, I have had the opportunity to work as a clinical dietitian, wellness consultant, nutrition support specialist, home health dietitian, and co-led several body image groups.

I am currently in private practice and consult at Washington University medical and graduate schools. My rates are affordable. Please feel free to contact me at my confidential voicemail at 314-453-4065.

## Fall 2008 Programs at ClearSpring

### WOMEN'S MIND-BODY WELLNESS GROUP

An ongoing psychotherapy group that meets every other Tuesday at 2:00 PM. Discussion topics focus on living optimistically with chronic health problems and exploration of mind/body tools such as meditation and guided imagery. Insurance coverage may apply. Contact Sherry Bassi, Ph.D., at 314-275-2300.

### BEHAVIORAL PAIN SOLUTIONS

A group program for persons with chronic pain. Participants learn about the psychology of pain and learn specific mind-body tools for pain reduction. The program is designed for persons undergoing medical treatment and physical rehabilitation for a chronic pain condition. Insurance coverage may apply. Contact Sherry Bassi, Ph.D., at 314-275-2300.

### POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY 101

Commit a morning of your life to learning happiness skills. In a 3-hour workshop, participants will explore and practice the tools described in the book, "The How of Happiness" by Sonya Lyubomirsky. The workshop will be held on Saturday October 25th from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. The cost is \$35. Contact Sherry Bassi, Ph.D., at 314-275-2300.

### TEEN GROUP

A 6-week program beginning this fall. Participants will experience a safe and caring environment with other adolescents where common experiences can be shared. Topics explored will include peer influences, self esteem, managing impulses, mood swings, stressors, conflict resolution, and coping strategies. Specific handouts, experiential activities, and self-help techniques will be used to emphasize key areas. Cost is \$150 for the 6-week session. Class size is limited. Contact Lisa Dahlgren, Ph.D., at 636-394-6210 or Sue Melaragno, M.Ed., at 636-675-0974.

### MEDITATION, MINDFULNESS, AND RELAXATION TRAINING

Join us for a series of six sessions introducing the basic methods of meditation, mindfulness, and relaxation training. Building on a foundation of Qigong Meditation, we will also explore several kinds of relaxation exercises, easy and fun meditations, and the use of mindfulness. The sessions are experiential in a relaxed atmosphere, geared for those who are new to these principles and who would like to explore a variety of methods for tuning into the mind-body connection. Cost \$60. Contact Lisa Dahlgren, Ph.D., at 636-394-6210.

### UPCOMING...

Jonna Mason, MSW, LCSW, and Tammy Cook, MS, RD, LD, are planning a women's group in January 2009 for ages 18 and up. The group will focus on any issues related to being a woman (such as self esteem, weight, body image, stress, coping with multiple responsibilities while caring for ourselves, etc.). Dates and times will be based on group preferences and needs.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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