

CORRECTIONAL OASIS

**A PUBLICATION OF DESERT WATERS CORRECTIONAL OUTREACH
A NON-PROFIT FOR THE WELL-BEING OF CORRECTIONAL STAFF AND THEIR FAMILIES**

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Preventing PTSD

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In the last issue of the *Correctional Oasis* I wrote that administrators should consider routinely providing options for treatment to staff exposed to violent or life-threatening work-related incidents. Two studies in the field of traumatology support this suggestion. Both studies examined ways to lessen the long-term impact of traumatic exposure. The goal of the studies was to research how to keep people who suffer from Acute Stress Disorder from developing Posttraumatic Stress Disorder later on.

Let me first do a little explaining about these terms.

Acute Stress Disorder (ASD)¹ is diagnosed when people who were exposed to trauma meet certain criteria for a period of two days up to a maximum of four weeks. By definition ASD assesses short-term reactions to traumatic events.

If symptoms persist for more than four weeks after the incident, people need to be assessed to see if they meet criteria for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)¹.

Why is the ASD diagnosis noteworthy? It is because those diagnosed with ASD are at high risk for developing PTSD. For example, between 78% and 82% of individuals diagnosed with ASD after a motor vehicle accident were found to suffer from PTSD six months after the accident^{2,3}. The question then becomes how to effectively treat ASD, so the development of PTSD can be prevented. Such a positive outcome would save many people much suffering.

In one study⁴ that researched PTSD prevention through ASD treatment, five weekly individual sessions of either cognitive behavior therapy or supportive therapy were offered to people suffering from ASD. The therapy sessions started within two weeks of the traumatic incident. Cognitive behavior therapy involved prolonged imaginal exposure, cognitive therapy and anxiety management. Supportive counseling involved nondirective counseling and general problem solving. It was found that six months later only 17% of the cognitive behavior group, yet 67% of the supportive counseling group met PTSD criteria. That is a dramatic difference in effectiveness of the two approaches.

In a follow-up study⁵ those findings were replicated. Additionally, it was found that prolonged exposure treatment was just as good as prolonged exposure plus anxiety management, and both were significantly better than supportive counseling. Six months after the traumatic incident, 15% of the prolonged exposure group and 23% of the prolonged exposure plus anxiety management group met criteria for PTSD as opposed to 67% of the supportive counseling group. Again, the differences in effectiveness are startling.

These two studies show that chronic PTSD can be prevented through the provision of only five sessions of prolonged exposure types of treatment and cognitive behavior therapy.

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IN MEMORIAM

CO Jennifer Sellers

EOW 08/08/2010

Waukesha Co Jail, WI

CO Tracy Cooper

EOW: 09/ 28/2010

Stateville Correctional
Center

Illinois DOC

Cause of Death: Assault

Date of Incident:

1/25/2010

Weapon Used: Person

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Preventing PTSD

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This is good news for correctional workers who are often routinely exposed to traumatic events, the toxic impact of which adds up over time. According to these studies, correctional workers' mental health, work performance and overall functioning can be safeguarded by a rather simple treatment intervention.

So let us examine ways to implement this preventative treatment approach in the corrections arena. The benefits will be great to all concerned, from frontline staff to supervisors to administrators to family members to offenders.

Only today I was contacted by a hard-working correctional officer who was exposed to two gruesome incidents at work, and whose work performance and morale ended up being affected negatively as a result. I cannot help but wonder whether these impairments could have been reduced or even avoided altogether had this person received the type of preventative treatment intervention I am advocating for in this article.

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Readers' Comments

I have been a Federal CO in Canada for the past 14 years. I have worked in the specialized field of drug dog and Emergency Response for the past 10 years. My wife and I met at the first prison I worked at. She is also still an officer.

I came upon your website and am truly inspired by your message and what seems to be your mission or mandate. I have often thought of this job as the job of an offensive lineman in football. The fans (public) love the quarterbacks, receivers and running backs, who make the big money and win the big games (cops, fire fighters). But without the big guys up front (correctional officers) keeping away the blitzing defenses, none of those things would happen. It's dirty work. It's dangerous. It breaches several front lines, but the only time they are spoken of is when the QB gets sacked, or something goes wrong. Sounds familiar??

So sites like this are truly moving. I will share this site with others I work with.

Thank you.

Craig Farrish

I can not tell you how blessed I am to have found your DWCO resource. I have started a "training" as they call it here at Hawaqua Prison in Wellington, South Africa. Nothing has really ever been done for the COs and they are SO APPRECIATIVE of anyone on the "outside" taking an interest in them. I find the newsletters really helpful as I am not myself in corrections. The views in the newsletter really strike a chord with the officers over here.

Can you please send me 2010 newsletters? I REALLY appreciate it and keep up the great job! All too often nobody says Thank You.... Well, **THANK YOU** all the way from South Africa!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Reg Cowie

Andrew Murray Prison Outreach

Monte Christo Ministries

Happiness Connected to Thankfulness, Not Pleasure

By Teresa Neumann

Reprinted with permission from www.breakingchristiannews.com.

“Taking the time to conscientiously count their blessings once a week significantly increased subjects’ overall satisfaction with life over a period of six weeks, whereas a control group that did not keep journals had no such gain.”

TIME magazine recently published a report on the “Science of Happiness.” The report began with a challenge put forth by University of Pennsylvania psychologist Martin Seligman in 1998 to his peers in which he suggested that rather than focusing on what troubles their patients, mental health practitioners should focus instead on what will make them “flourish.”

“I realized that my profession was half-baked,” said Seligman of his new vision for psychology. “It wasn’t enough for us to nullify disabling conditions and get to zero. We needed to ask, *What are the enabling conditions that make human beings flourish? How do we get from zero to plus five?*”

Ultimately, the Templeton Foundation in England became involved with his research. The studies revealed some interesting facts about happiness. Among them were:

- Even the happiest of people feel blue at times, and even the bluest have their moments of joy.
- Once your basic needs are met, additional income does little to raise your sense of satisfaction with life.
- Youth doesn’t make one happy because, in fact, older people are more consistently satisfied with their lives than the young, and less prone to moodiness.
- Married people are generally happier than singles.
- A sunny climate doesn’t affect happiness.
- Religious faith “lifts the spirit.”
- Friends are important to happiness.
- And, lastly, happiness can be an afterthought. The example given: “If you were to randomly beep someone on vacation in Italy, you might catch that person waiting furiously for a slow-moving waiter to take an order or grouching about the high cost of the pottery. But if you ask when it’s over, ‘How was the vacation in Italy?’ the average person remembers the peak moments and how he or she felt at the end of the trip.”

As a result of his research, Seligman reportedly found three components of happiness: pleasure, engagement [in life], and meaning. Of those three, he insists pleasure is the least consequential.

“This is newsworthy,” he said, “because so many Americans build their lives around pursuing pleasure. It turns out that *engagement* and *meaning* are much more important.”

What I found most interesting in this ... article were some of the conclusions and suggestions some of the researchers made to help people become “happy.” ...

For example, psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky of the University of California at Riverside is studying the effects of keeping a “gratitude journal.” According to the article, “she has found that taking the time to conscientiously count their blessings once a week significantly increased subjects’ overall satisfaction with life over a period of six weeks, whereas a control group that did not keep journals had no such gain.”

Seligman took the concept a step further and suggests making “gratitude visits,” in which people express their thanks in person to people they are grateful for. He also recommended an exercise called the “three blessings”—taking time each day to write down a trio of things that went well, and why.

Lyubomirsky summed it up nicely by quoting Oprah, which she says she normally doesn’t do: “She [Oprah] was asked how she runs five miles a day, and she said, ‘I recommit to it every day of my life.’ I think happiness is like that. Every day you have to renew your commitment. Hopefully, some of the strategies will become habitual over time and not a huge effort.”

Since giving thanks in “all things” can be a challenge in the best of times, the take-away lesson for me in this report is that the next time I feel like whining about the weather or money problems, I may just sit down and write a list of blessings or go make a “gratitude visit.” *Source: Claudia Wallis—TIME Magazine* ■

ALLURE: Detecting Deception & Truth

Body Cues—Part 4

By Rick Nielsen

Rick Nielsen is a Community Corrections Officer. He can be contacted at richard.nielsen@doc.wa.gov. This is the fourth in a series of five articles on this subject. This article builds on the previous articles in this series. Parts 1, 2, & 3 can be found in prior issues of the Correctional Oasis posted on the Desert Waters' website www.desertwaters.com.

Remember your ALLURE, (ALLURE is copyright ©2009-2010 Richard A. Nielsen):

1. **ASK** unexpected questions that bring out behavioral responses. Vrij et al 2009
2. **LOOK** for stress & controlling behavior changes from baselines. Don't just focus on deception cues. DePaulo et al 2003
3. **LISTEN** to the voice & the words. DePaulo et al 2003
4. **UNDERSTAND** everything in context. Porter 2009, Vrij et al 2001
5. **REPEAT** the process often; keep scanning. Porter 2009, Vrij et al 2001
6. **ERRORS**: Beware of the errors of basing detection on one cue, one channel, or any one device. There really is no Pinocchio's nose. Herbert 2007

If you look for it, you'll find ALLURE in the article below.

From our previous definition of deception:

- False information cues include evidence confirming truths which are contrary to the lies being told
 - Contrary cues*—cues confirming the liar's own disbelief in his/her statement(s)
 - Corroborating evidence, including the two court staples:
 - Physical evidence, and
 - Witness testimony
- Concealment cues would be masking attempts seen as such
 - Masking cues*
- Withholding cues would be signs of holding back
 - Holding-back cues*
 - Context-relevant stress signs*

Body Cues include:

- Movements of the hands, arms, feet, legs, torso, hips, back, front, & shoulders, but not the head, face, and neck, or hands touching the head, face or neck
- Context-relevant autonomic responses of the body
- Online avatar-mediated communications
- Video recordings of body movements

To review, reliable cues to truth and deception are evidence-based.

1. Class 1 Cues: Generalized across genders and cultures. Seem to be universal due to multitude of evidence.
2. Class 2 Cues: Contrary cues illustrate non-support of statement, affect, or emotion. May be universal—less evidence. Can be generalized across genders within a few cultures.
3. Class 3 Cues: Not universal. May be generalized—but there is less evidence.
4. Class 4 Cues: Not generalized. Best opinions of vetted authorities. Include specific idiosyncrasies & "tells."

In this series of articles we'll focus on Class 1 & 2 Cues.

Class 1 Body Cues (DePaulo et al 2003)

- Liars make a more negative impression.

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ALLURE:

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- Liars use less illustrators, or the hand and arm motions or other “animations” which “illustrate” speech. For example, when describing how big a fish is, the speaker uses the hands to bracket the approximate length.
- Liars are more tense. They move less, almost as if “sitting on their hands”, so to say.
Liars are more tense overall.
Liars show less “fidgiting”

Class 2 Body Cues (Ekman 2009, Navarro et al 2008)

- Liars shrug one or both shoulders, signifying “I don’t know” or “I’m not sure” in opposition to their affirmative statement.
- Liars tilt their hand or thumb, signifying “I don’t know” in opposition to their affirmative statement.

There is not too much to remember with the Class 1 and Class 2 Body Cues.

Here’s some “homework.” Watch a news interview, the more unrehearsed the better, and count the full or partial shrugs and the lack of illustrators you find. Also, for extra credit, watch videos of yourself speaking, and count your erroneous body movements.

Good luck and stay safe! And join me next time for my final article on deception cues of the head and face.

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I Have a “Light” at the End of the Tunnel

An Australian point of view

I have recently been privileged to have received help from Desert Waters. Going to America all the way from Australia seeking an answer to my own and very personal “Correctional fallout” was a huge step. I was probably the most resistant student they had ever seen. When given options and ways to beat the demons I carried within me, my standard answer was, “It’ll never happen”. Oh ye of little faith!! Wasn’t I wrong!!

Flying 14 hours from Australia to Desert Waters, Florence, Colorado, USA, I didn’t know if it would work.

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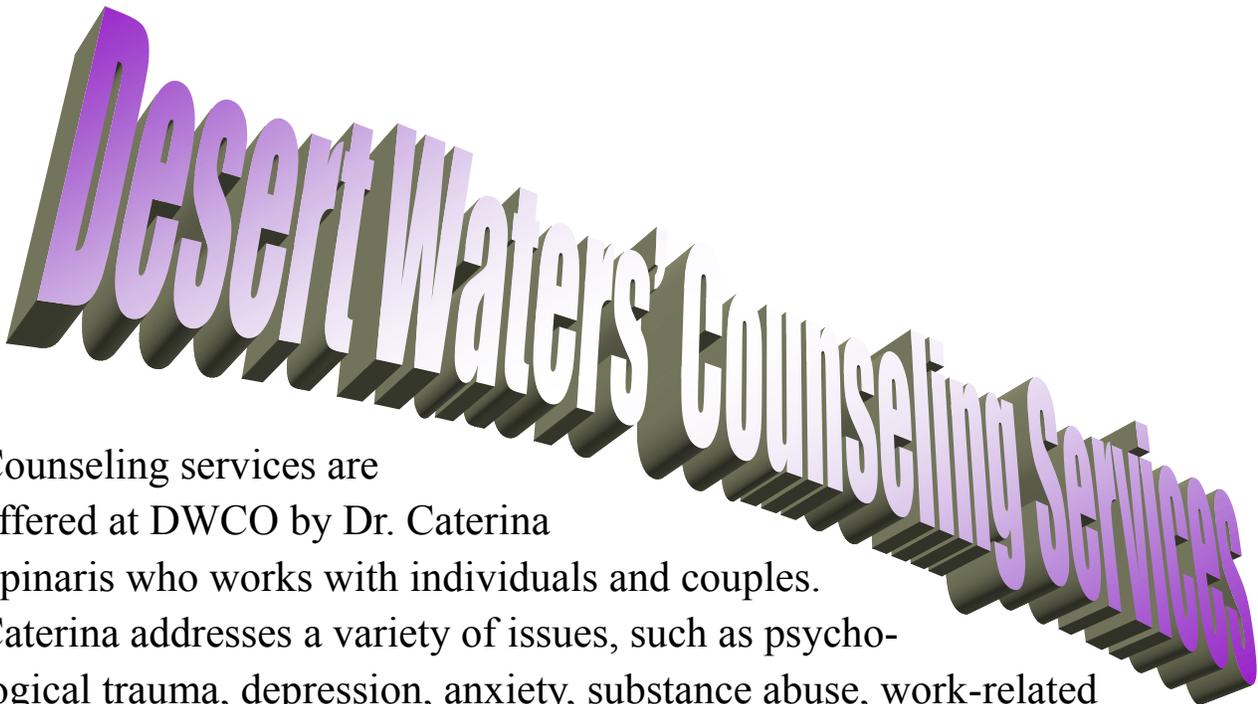
I Have a “Light” at the End of the Tunnel

(Continued from page 5)

I didn't know if I could do the programs. I didn't know if I would like what was available and being offered to me. Self funding this gamble to get my life back was a big step and a scary one. But quite soon after completing a few sessions at Desert Waters, I discovered that there is **always** a light at the end of the tunnel when I am feeling down, confused, lost, sad or worried. That “**light**” is someone you love. It may be your husband / wife / partner or your child, best friend, pet dog, cat, horse, or your God. All you have to do is look for that “light” and be thankful for the **sincere** love you receive from your own **personal “light.”** I have also now discovered that I am greedy, as I now have several “lights” to draw on when in need. My little Tako (2-year old English Border Collie who loves me unreservedly); my wife who has stuck by me through the tough times, the angry times, the desperate times and the nightmares; my friends who respectfully don't talk “shop” while I am with them; and a simple but low key renewed faith. I am not one who attends church except for weddings, funerals and the occasional Christening. I don't wear a cross on a chain. I don't pray every night. I have a Bible in the house somewhere but would have to hunt to find it. I swear sometimes. I blaspheme occasionally. (Well, a lot actually, as I am a poor mechanic but love tinkering with cars.) But quite often I say to myself, “Please God, make this one work” or “ Please God, help my friend get over such and such.”

So the light you choose is the one that you think works.

But why not be like me? Be greedy. Have a lot of “lights!” ■



Counseling services are offered at DWCO by Dr. Caterina

Spinaris who works with individuals and couples.

Caterina addresses a variety of issues, such as psychological trauma, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, work-related injuries, and some personality disorders. She also offers intensive treatment (20 hours of counseling per week) for those who do not live in the area.

Several major insurance plans are accepted. Caterina is also a provider for the Magellan EAP Network and the Department of Labor's ACS OWCP.

Desert Waters

Correctional Outreach



a non-profit organization
for the well-being of correctional
staff and their families

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Check it out! Thanks to Josh MacDonald of www.joshmacconsulting.com.

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We invite you to partner with us by making tax-deductible donations of any amount to DWCO. We raise all our funds to serve you, and we thank you for every dollar you send to us.

Please remember that you need to make your end-of-year giving contributions by December 31 (postmarked or online, www.desertwaters.com) to qualify for a tax deduction in 2010. We are very grateful for your support!

Quote of the Month

Someone said adversity builds character, but someone else said adversity reveals character. ...I persevere, and not just blindly. I **take the best, get rid of the rest**, and move on, realizing that **you can make a choice to take the good.**

Brooke Shields, LIFE, March 23, 2007. Emphasis added.