



MAINSTREAM MENTAL HEALTH

May 2022/ Issue 26

OUTPATIENT THERAPY

“I think the stigma surrounding mental illness and also the stigma surrounding self-esteem issues or insecurities or just even feeling different is something that doesn’t really get enough attention. Everybody struggles with feeling alone or that they are going through something they don’t quite understand.”

~Brittany Snow

Outpatient therapy is available to process issues, treat a diagnosis, or work on a treatment objective. An interview with Jennifer Damon, an Outpatient Therapist with MMHS, describes her perspective on the therapy she provides to adults and children. It is a welcoming place for assisting the client in improving their mental health. Jennifer outlines the client’s part in their role, her idea of professional boundaries, and her enthusiasm for the successful results. Hopefully, the encouragement and processing help the client with their goals and objectives.

Jennifer says that it depends on the situation for how to engage and start to process with somebody. She is solution focused on processing an issue. She states, “With adults they usually have no problem kind of discussing their feelings they can articulate a little better. With children it is a whole other ball game [so] I do a lot of activities and a lot of role play things such as that.” Shpancer writes in the article “How Therapy Works: What it Means to ‘Process an Issue’” that “processing an issue in therapy means bringing the issue into the light of another’s benevolent attention.”

An effort is expected on the part of the client in their own recovery. Jennifer says, “I might send home kind of a gratitude journal or things like that, and I try to get the parents to help the little ones to do it so that the parents are aware of what we are working on with the child. So, they can reinforce the positive outlook and that self-esteem building and whatever it is that we happen to be working on.” She encourages journaling, making lists of pros and cons for a big decision, and reflecting on behaviors to gain insight into themselves.

There are professional boundaries with therapy and the professional relationship. Jennifer says, “I think some people are under the impression that a therapist is going to tell them what to do and how to live their life and everything is going to be fixed and go away and be happy.” Jennifer will never tell them what to do but she will ask them to consider options and then talk about the options. She says, “but ultimately that choice is up to them I can’t make decisions for somebody.” The answer is with the client, and it is her job just to bring those out. It has to come from the client. Why is this important to know? Jennifer states, “I can’t wave a magic wand and make the stuff all go away and there is no magic bullet answer for what is going on with someone.”

Jennifer believes that clients can manage their symptoms with the right type of treatment whether it be medication or therapy or a combination of both. She treats the person and not the diagnosis, “person always a person first I think a diagnosis can be a good guide sometimes and how to understand what a client is going through and maybe provide a way to provide the services kind of a structure but always people first.” Also, a diagnosis that occurred 5 years ago may not

apply to the current situation. Psychotherapy is a way to treat a diagnosis. The Mayo Clinic states, “There are many types of psychotherapy, each with its own approach to improving your mental well-being. Psychotherapy often can be successfully completed in a few months, but in some cases, long-term treatment may be needed.” Jennifer does not predict the length of treatment. She says, “It all depends on how much work the person puts into it. If a person is really working hard. People also react to their environment. You can have someone that is doing wonderful and with depression taking the meds doing the therapy making some important strides and then suddenly their husband asks for a divorce. Boom you never know because nobody lives in a vacuum. We are part of society. Somebody could be doing great with their anxiety Covid hits uh oh everybody is scared. Sends it right back into a tailspin. I don’t predict.”

Just like the quote says, there are times people struggle with something they don’t understand. Seeking professional help is very appropriate. A professional can help with negative thoughts, working through your feelings, and establishing goals (Clissold). Sometimes you just need an objective person to be honest and straightforward with you about the realities of life. Jennifer likes to help people into mainstream society. “For 17 years in NY I did supported employment where I helped clients find competitive employment and be successful so that is my language. Sometimes even with the little kids, and parents I try to look at things like what would this person do out in society in a job. I kind of use that for the basis for my therapeutic approaches because I try to be realistic, and absolutely do I want people to be productive and live their best life... Being the best that we can be for our families, for ourselves, for the society. That’s my language. I’m all about it. Clients getting jobs, clients being successful in their relationships, their marriages, not going in the hospital, there are so many ways, because that contributes to all of society because we are not as taxpayers paying for that hospital stay. On so many levels, we help. Because when a person is healthy, it’s just better for everybody. And society as a whole from themselves to their families to their employers to all of society. I think that is a goal that we reach without even trying that is like the end goal that is the result in the end we start with one individual and a handful of problems but then it takes off from there and the healthier they get the better it all gets. We need a world of healthy people!”

Thus, processing an issue for adults is easier for them to discuss their feelings while children benefit from activities. Jennifer encourages journaling and making lists of pros and cons. The biggest professional boundary she describes is that clients must make their own decisions. In treatment, a diagnosis may help with structure, but it is the person who is there to manage their symptoms. How long treatment will last is difficult to predict. The benefits of working on objectives in therapy have success for the client for their goals as well as the society as a whole.

Shpancer, N. (2018, January 3). *How Therapy Works: What it Means to “Process an Issue.”* Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/insight-therapy/201801/how-therapy-works-what-it-means-process-issue?msclkid=d63d8dedb9b511ec8cb363cddf7d8e4c>

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MAY BIRTHDAYS

5/6 Latoya
5/8 Kathryn
5/19 Myra

5/25 Paul
5/29 Kim

May

2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Cards Tournament Movie	3 Bowling in the morning Scott's Group	4 Thrasher Park Laticia's Peer to peer	5 Lily's Group Walmart	6 Blue's Fun Friday Group All Day	7
8	9 Sam's Group Coloring Hour	10 Recreational Time Scott's Group	11 Target Peer to Peer	12 Lily's Group Explorer Park	13 Blue's Fun Friday Group All Day	14
15	16 Lily's Group Fire Drill	17 Scott's Group Karaoke	18 Valley View Mall Peer to Peer	19 Amber's Group Making friendship bracelets	20 Blue's Fun Friday Group All Day	21
22	23 Sam's Group Karaoke	24 Scott's Group Tornado Drill	25 Peer to Peer Celebrating May's Birthday	26 Amber's Group Comedy Movie	27 Blue's Fun Friday Group All Day	28
29	30 Sam's Group June Ideas for the calendar	31 Bowling Scott's Group				