

Welcome to *Bryanwood Therapy and Assessment Centre's* first electronic newsletter. The newsletter aims to cover a wide variety of topics related to mental health. There will also be information relevant to professionals such as teachers and doctors, as well as information you can use to help yourself, your child & teenager, your spouse and your friends.

Please forward this newsletter to anyone you think may be interested!

Depression in Men

Depression is a serious but treatable condition that can strike anyone, including men. No matter what you do for a living, whether you are rich or poor, alone or surrounded by loved ones, you are not immune to depression. Some factors, however, such as family history, excessive stress, loss or serious illness can make you more vulnerable.

Men in general feel that depression is a sign of weakness and may try to anaesthetise themselves from the inner pain by working excessively, abusing substances (drugs and alcohol), watching television excessively and so forth. However, if left untreated, depression can lead to personal, family and financial difficulties, and in some cases, end in suicide. With appropriate diagnosis and treatment, however, most people recover. The darkness dissipates, hope for the future returns, energy and desire come back, and interest in life becomes stronger than ever.

Not everyone suffering from depression experiences every symptom. Some people experience a few whilst others suffer many. The severity of the symptoms varies among individuals and also over time.

- Persistent sad, anxious or empty mood
- Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and pessimism
- Feelings of guilt and worthlessness
- Loss of pleasure or interest in hobbies and activities
- Decreased energy, fatigue, feeling numb
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Sleep difficulties, such as excessive sleeping or difficulty falling asleep or early morning awakening
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts
- Restlessness, irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms

If these signs and symptoms, describe you or a man that you care about, talk to your GP for a referral to a psychologist.

BRYANWOOD CENTRE OFFERS THERAPY FOR CHILDREN (PLAY THERAPY), ADOLESCENTS, ADULTS AND COUPLES. CALL THE CENTRE FOR AN APPOINTMENT (011) 706-2269 / (011) 706-0979.

Children's Imaginary Friends

It is very common for young children to have imaginary friends. Their surprised parents, however, often wonder, "Is it normal?" An imaginary friend is a child's way of making sense of the world, and, in many cases, it's a sign that the child is very creative and resourceful. Some children have a single imaginary friend while others will change "pretend playmates" everyday.

Children often create imaginary friends at times of stress and these friends may help the child deal with the normal anxieties of growing up; for example, the birth of a sibling, divorce, or when a friend moves away. Imaginary friends also help children cope with being alone from time to time. For some children, they have the same function as favourite toys, blankets and other "comfort" objects.

Although imaginary friends are normal, problems may arise when the child prefers to play with his/her imaginary friends rather than "real" children. This should be addressed by the parent/teacher in order to ascertain what is happening for that particular child. In order to learn about the child's likes, desires and fears it would be important to:

Talk to the child: Find out the imaginary friend's name and gender and what the child "does" with them.

Ask the child questions: Try to establish the function the imaginary friend has for the child. For example, is the imaginary friend used to cope with loneliness, boredom or victimisation?

Don't put the child down: This is a childhood phase that usually subsides.

As children get older, it is essential to provide enjoyable experiences with real children and real things to do and the imaginary friend will become uninteresting. If, however, a child's imaginary friend is still visiting at 9 or 10 years old, or if it's a frightening companion who makes the child act out in destructive ways, a child psychologist should be consulted.

BRYANWOOD CENTRE OFFERS PSYCHOLOGISTS WHO SPECIALISE IN CHILDREN'S DIFFICULTIES AND ISSUES. CALL THE CENTRE FOR AN APPOINTMENT (011) 706-2269 / (011) 706-0979.

Why Psycho-Educational Assessments are important in recognising Learning Disabilities and ADD/ADHD

When information is taken from the outside world by one of the senses, for example, the eyes, it has to be processed in the brain. Information is transmitted electrically and chemically. The new incoming information must be stored with information that is related and stored correctly so that it can be retrieved for future use. There are many relay stations where errors might occur. Children with a Learning Disorder and ADHD* are believed to have dysfunctions in either the electrical or chemical processing of information.

Learning Disabilities and ADD/ADHD* can affect all children regardless of gender, race or socio-economic status. Learning disabilities are believed to be as a result of an information processing or neurological dysfunction. ADHD* appears to be as a result of a neurotransmitter imbalance involving the brain mechanisms responsible for maintaining attention. The aforementioned information processing dysfunction and chemical imbalance are presumed to be directly related to academic underachievement. Learning disabilities can co-occur and a child can have a reading and a math disability, for example. Learning disabilities also often co-occur with ADHD*.

Psycho-Educational Assessments comprise two different aspects of testing: testing of intellectual functioning and testing of educational functioning. Intellectual testing generally measures potential and not what has been learned. In addition to the overall IQ, intelligence tests provide measures of different types of cognitive ability; for example, how well you can remember facts in long-term memory or how well you can organize a visual field. Educational assessment measures what has been learned in math, reading, spelling and other academic areas. When intellectual and educational testing are included in an overall assessment of a child it is called a *psycho-educational* assessment which help document the information processing dysfunctions with Learning Difficulties and ADHD*.

** It is important to note that other possible causes for inattentive, impulsive and over-active behaviour could involve physical, psychological or environmental factors.*

BRYANWOOD HAS EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS THAT OFFER FULL PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENTS. PHONE THE CENTRE AT (011) 706-2269 / (011) 706-0979 TO MAKE A BOOKING

Thoughtful bits

The drawbacks of showing too much love

Those people who give the impression they like just about everyone, tend to be popular and liked themselves. But a new study of speed daters suggests the opposite is true in a romantic context. In these set of circumstances, the more daters a person reported finding desirable, the *less* likely they were to be rated desirable and appealing themselves - a finding not explained by a lack of physical attractiveness, which was controlled for in the study. The finding suggests a person's desperation for love can be picked

up by others in as little as four minutes, an effect that is off-putting to potential dates who want to be made to feel special. The researchers conclude that "...the need to feel special plays a central role even within the first few moments of a romantic encounter".

Is working from home less stressful?

The option of working from home sounds appealing, after all, you're your own boss, the travel to work entails leaping out of bed to your desk, and you don't have anyone checking your e-mails and how long you took for lunch. But at what cost? That's the question posed by researchers who investigated the possibility that working from home compromises the home as a place of refuge and restoration.

The Swedish study looked at employees of a company who had the option of working from home or doing all their work in the office. The researchers were mostly interested in how much overlap the employees experienced between their work and home lives. To their surprise, the researchers found that overall, the work-from-home employees didn't experience any greater overlap between their work and home lives compared with the employees who worked at the office. However, there was a crucial difference between the sexes. Whereas work-from-home males actually reported experiencing less overlap between their work and private lives than the male employees at the office, the reverse was true for work-from-home females, for whom working at home had led to increased work/life overlap. "This result bears on the possibility that women are more susceptible to the costs of working from home", the researchers said. The finding is consistent with research published in 2000 that work-from-home females tended to spend more time occupied in domestic chores than males who work from home with the same work load. Another finding from this study was that having a separate room in the home for work doesn't necessarily prevent work/life overlap.



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