



VALLEY CHRISTIAN  
COUNSELING CENTER INC.

May Is Mental Health  
Awareness Month!



May 2017



# A Place of Grace & Healing



## It Is Not Always What You Expect

*Men and women are created beautifully different. This is true for experiencing depression as well. One similarity? There is hope.*

Most of us can agree that men and women are different in significant ways. Ways that are good, necessary, and life-giving, and ways that are confusing.

Depression is no exception. Women tend exhibit the symptoms typically seen in the diagnosis of depression, whereas men's symptom's are often very different.

depressed.

Self-medication exacerbates the matter. Alcoholism, work-aholism, pornography addiction, rage, success at the expense of family, and gambling keep a man's attention away from the pain by numbing what depressive symptoms he may be experiencing.

These destructive means of dealing with the pain will not last. Terry Real

*"We've found ourselves with the perfect storm for men . . . to continue down the path of destruction and denial."*

In his silence-breaking book, "I Don't Want to Talk About It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression," therapist Terry Real helps to crack the code on what he calls "covert" depression and the ways that men mask their pain.

It's no secret that our American society tends to socialize men and women differently. For men this socialization often has led to an internal disconnection that can lead to depression.

Add to that the fact that male depression is often passed on from generation to generation. We've found ourselves with the perfect storm for men who are internally unacquainted with themselves to continue down the familial path of destruction and denial.

Men tend to externalize pain . This keeps them from feeling depressed but does not keep them from being

points out that "the only real cure for covert depression is overt depression." In other words, in order to heal, you have to feel.

And this is exactly what generations of men have been trained not to do – to feel the depth of the sadness of having not been fathered well, the breadth of rage over the abuse he suffered at the hands of a coach, the gut-wrenching agony and humiliation of being sexually abused by the neighbor, or the gravity of the loss of a dream that stood as his only means to a way out of the life he swore he'd never live.

Shame. Grief. Loneliness. Insecurity. Loss.

I am convinced that countless marriages have been lost to male depression. A myriad of children have known a physically present but . . .

*(Continued on back)*

May is Mental Health Awareness month. Our mental and emotional health is something that we often take for granted. It may be a world that confuses or scares us. But taking care of our mental health can be done in small ways like taking time to breathe, and giving ourselves compliments.

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Mental Health Awareness



## May is Mental Health Awareness Month

*Many people face unseen battles everyday. VCCC gives them a safe place to feel whole.*

**Your gift of \$40 or more helps to bring healing in your community.**

We reached an all time high of new clients in March.  
92 of our neighbors came to Valley for the first time in March.

**Will you consider giving a gift? We are looking for 92 supporters to give as we respond to the needs of these people.**

## 4 Ways to Help a Child with Anxiety

***Bubbles, Pinwheels, Candles, and Squares* — these are not the four new shapes in your Lucky Charms cereal, but four playful ways to help your children with anxiety.**

You know that breathing is necessary to live, but did you know that breathing, especially deep breathing, can be useful for so much more?

**Research continues to show us how deep breathing can benefit our physical and mental health.**

You can literally Google “deep breathing benefits” and find thousands of articles attesting to this. So unless you have the rare child who will engage in 20 minutes of meditative breathing, **it’s nice to have some playful ways to encourage kids to practice.**

**1) Bubble Breathing.** Children are provided with bubbles and told to take a long, deep breath in through their nose, then slowly blow it out to create as big of a bubble as they can.

**2) Pinwheel Breathing.** You can make or buy a pinwheel and have kids take a long, deep breath in and blow out slowly to turn the pinwheel. The farther away they hold the pinwheel, the deeper the breaths.

**3) Birthday Candle Breathing.** Kids (or parents) hold out their fingers as if they are candles. The child will take a deep breath in and a long breath out to “blow out” each of the candles.

**4) Square Breathing.** This is one that is easy for

kids to use at school without it being obvious what they are doing. They can draw a square on their paper and each line indicates what to do with their breath.

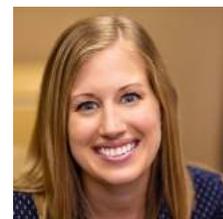
The first line of the square means to take a breath in for a count of four; the next line is hold your breath for four seconds, the next line is to exhale for four seconds, and the final line is to hold for another four seconds.

It is important to practice these skills when the child is calm. Once they become familiar with the idea and use of deep breathing, they may be more likely to use it when experiencing anxiety. You don’t expect to be a star athlete or musician without practice, right?

**Children also learn what they see. If they see their parents taking deep breaths when upset or anxious, they will be more likely to follow that example.**



- Jessie Mertz,  
Counselor at VCCC



# Our Thoughts are Like a Garden

*Would you put that thought on a T-shirt? No? Then you might need to weed it out.*

Did you know that humans have between 60,000 and 80,000 thoughts per day? I was shocked when I read that statistic. That is A LOT of thinking! It sounds exhausting, but rest assured, this is not a bad thing. This is what our brains were made to do.

Just like our ears were made to hear, our brains were made to think. It only becomes a problem when we start having thoughts that are not true, hopeful or helpful. And in some cases, those thoughts are about ourselves. This is called self-talk and it's really important.

When self-talk is healthy, life can be really good and we can navigate through challenges with grace and joy. But when self-talk is negative, we tend to see life from a darkened perspective. Have you ever had thoughts like the following?

*It's no use . . . I just can't find time . . . I'm not good enough . . . It will never work out . . . I am a bad parent . . . I'm too this or I'm not enough that . . . It will never work out . . . I never get the breaks in life . . . I am a bad parent. . . My body is too this or too that. . . I don't know what to do . . . God is punishing me . . .*

Most of us have those kinds of thoughts and we rarely stop and take a good hard look at them. I frequently ask my clients, "Would you print that thought on a t-shirt?" and we usually giggle. In addition to that, we would never talk to our friends like this, but sometimes this is exactly how we talk to ourselves.

When I catch myself in a negative thinking pattern, I try to remind myself of the "whatever is lovely" bible verse. Phillipians 4:8 says, "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things."

The good news is, there are plenty of ways to im-

prove your self talk and thought life. Here are just a few:

1) Bible verses make beautiful affirmations.



Photo Credit: Danielle Burkleo

2) "I Am" affirmations. These would be what you want to be (i.e., happy, healthy, safe, strong).

3) Gratitude. This is a powerhouse remedy.

4) Stay flexible. Remind yourself that you are not a tree.

5) Look for the hidden good or lesson in every situation.

6) Practice, practice, practice. Many ideas are common sense but they aren't common practice. Repetition is key.

Now, please know that I am not suggesting that you put on a fake smile and run around sprinkling rainbow glitter all over everyone at Hornbachers! While the glitter part might be kind of fun, I never recommend a fake smile.

What I recommend is finding a new reason to smile. We can choose to pursue thoughts of loss, pain, anger, bitterness and comparison. Or, we can choose to pursue whatever is lovely. And out of that holy pursuit, I believe we will start to sprout the seeds of joy!

- Shannon Heick,  
Counselor at VCCC



FloraPine Photography

Dear Supporters,

I sincerely hope you enjoy this issue focusing on Mental Health Awareness. May is the month where we mental health providers help the public gain new insights into what we see every day. Like Heather Bjur's article on male depression illustrates, we are often unaware of the suffering of those around us.

This month we hope you will learn some things that will help you and others around you! Thanks to so many of you who support what we do here at Valley!!

Blessings,  
  
Dan Borsheim, CEO



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emotionally absent father. It's gone undiagnosed and untreated for too many generations.

If these words strike a chord with you or if you have a man in your life who seems to be blowing up his world with some form of self-medication or an overt rage that won't be tamed, your concerns are not unwarranted. There is help.



There is a second chance. This IS treatable. But please, get help now. Don't wait another day. He doesn't have to suffer alone. If he can't say it, gently voice your concern. "You seem so distant. So angry. I'm worried. I'd like for us to get some help."

You can help stop the cycle and the rest of your story can be different. There is life on the other side of male depression.



- Heather Bjur,  
*Counselor at VCCC*

# Thank You!

**You are helping to heal marriages.**

Last month we shared how your support can help nurture strong relationships through marriage counseling at Valley. **Your gifts last month will help us provide 19 couples with counseling to help strengthen and guide their marriage. Thank you.**



Marriages take time, grace, love, and forgiveness. Counseling is not just for marriages that are on the verge of ending. Marriage can be complex and messy. It can be joyful and life bringing. It can always use a little bit of guidance and strengthening.

**Sometimes, even the strongest of marriages need a little bit of support.** Your financial support gives our community a place of grace and healing to turn to when life throws a road bump in their way.

**With 12 of our 18 counselors prepared to help those with marriage concerns,** we see a lot of couples walk through the doors at Valley.

**You are helping to bridge the gap** between what health insurance will cover and the crucial services that people need and desire. We cannot do what we do without you.

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