Strengthening and healing families

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As our new fiscal and academic year begins, we welcome the largest number of new and returning graduate students to our two Master’s programs. They are coming to a strong and vibrant Institute that successfully weathered the economic turmoil of the last year. We owe many thanks to our talented clinical and administrative staff for their extra efforts that resulted in a record number of therapy sessions (almost 60,000) for a record number of cases (almost 6,000). Through our Bette D. Harris Family and Child Clinic, almost 40% of those sessions were offered at an average fee of $11. We are very proud that for over 40 years we have been able to not only survive but thrive during difficult economic times. We are stronger and more passionate than ever in pursuit of our mission to strengthen and heal families from all walks of life through clinical service, community outreach, professional education and research.

Our Board of Directors deserves special recognition for sustaining and guiding us through the past year. Under the leadership of Bob Lipman, Board Chair, the Board provided sound advice about how to tighten our institutional belt without compromising our major strategic initiatives. This October, Bob will be stepping down after three years as a very successful Chair. We are glad that he will be staying on the Board and continue to provide his sage counsel. After serving as Vice Chair for the past three years, Jim Feldman is the new Chair Designate. Susan Kennedy-Reachers will help lead the Board as our new Vice Chair Designate.

Even though this has been a stellar year of achievement in the face of unprecedented challenges, it has also been a year of loss. Jan Kramer, who co-founded the Institute in 1968 with her husband Chuck, passed away this summer. Chuck and Jan started the Institute in their Oak Park house, and in many ways, Jan was the mother of the Institute. She was also a very talented therapist who pioneered the notion of therapists working on their own families with renewed confidence and commitment to our students, clients, staff, Board and donors.

I cannot close this letter without thanking all of you who provided your ongoing support to the Institute this past year. Without your efforts, we could not do the therapeutic and knowledge-generating work that is central to our mission. We look forward to the year ahead with renewed confidence and commitment to our students, clients, staff, Board and donors.

President’s Letter
from William M. Pinsof, Ph.D.

Transformational Gift

The Bette D. Harris Family and Child Clinic was created by the Harris Family to care for people from all walks of life regardless of their ability to pay for our services. This year, the Harris Family made their final payment toward a 10-year pledge of support to endow the clinic.

The Harris Family gift has endowed us with the capacity to serve people who might otherwise be unable to find high quality mental health care.

During this economic recession, we are noting increased demand for service through the Clinic, and we are proud we can continue to offer great care to all people regardless of their ability to pay or proof of insurance.

The Family Institute at Northwestern University remains incredibly grateful to the Harris Family for the creation of the Bette D. Harris Family and Child Clinic.

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Institute News is published twice a year for friends, donors and alumni.

To join the mailing list:
To join the mailing list and receive updates and further information on events and happenings at The Family Institute, please contact Erin Conway at 312-409-5300, ext. 480 or erin@family-institute.org.

Are you a member of the alumni? Would you like to speak with fellowship-staff for more information contact Cyndi Schu at 312-409-5300, ext. 480 or cyndis@family-institute.org.

Photos courtesy of Mary Verides Photography, Jeff Ellis Photography and Andrew Campbell Photography.

Norris University Center, Evanston
Celebration Reception
Sue Johnson Externship
TBD, North Shore
TBD, Chicago
April 23, 2010

Calendar of Events

November 6, 2009
Fall Conference with Sue Johnson and 40th Anniversary Celebration Reception
Norris University Center, Evanston
If you are interested in more information about our upcoming events, please contact Erin Conway at 312-409-5300, ext. 480 or erin@family-institute.org.
This past April, The Family Institute held its annual Spring Circle of Knowledge lectures. Guests gathered at two separate private clubs on the North Shore and in downtown Chicago to hear Dr. William Pinsof discuss “Finding the Silver Lining: Strengthening Family Connections in a Time of Crisis.”

Dr. Pinsof explored how people can think of the economic crisis as an opportunity for couples and families to reorganize values and focus on what is really important in life. He also addressed dangers like anxiety and depression and discussed strategies for how to communicate more openly.

Dr. Pinsof outlined some ways to buffer the effects of the economic crisis.

- Practice open-hearted listening between couples. Talk about your experience without blaming or shaming your partner. Focus on yourself, not your partner.
- Answer children’s questions with as much information as they can handle. Kids love their parents for who they are, not what they earn. Being vulnerable with your children can be validating and connecting.
- Couple and family counseling can be very helpful in times of crisis because it creates connections and facilitates sharing.

The Family Institute has developed a fresh and user-friendly model for testing children and adults. Assessments help us understand, among other things:

- Why is my child not doing well in school?
- Is my personal style in the way of relationships, performance or work advancement?
- Why can’t my child, or why can’t I, concentrate?
- What is the matter with my memory?
- Is the decline due to Alzheimer’s?
- Why is my child acting out? What can I do about it that will work?
- Does my child have Asperger’s, Executive Functioning or an Attention Deficit Disorder? Is it a Learning Disability or Dyslexia? Is it an educational model or school a good fit?

IN MEMORIAM: JEANNETTE KRAMER

Jeannette Kramer, wife of the late Family Institute founder, Chuck Kramer, passed away in July. Jeannette and Chuck founded the Institute 40 years ago in their home in Oak Park, Illinois. Together they created the framework that pioneered our profession of systems-based family therapy methods and began training the first generation of marriage and family therapists.

Jeannette was a warm and wonderful woman and a friend to all who knew her. “What I remember about Jan is that it was so impressive that she was living a huge family life while working professionally with families at the same time. She was dealing with major challenges on all fronts but was able to somehow balance it all,” says Rina Dominguez, staff therapist at The Family Institute. “It seemed as if she had a really strong inner core that gave her direction on every front.”

It is with sadness that we announce her death yet we take great comfort in all that she accomplished during her life. It is truly thanks to her and her husband that we have become the top organization for family therapy studies and clinical service in the United States. Her legacy will live on in our four-fold commitment to clinical service, community outreach, graduate education and research.
Alumni Spring Social

The Alumni Association of The Family Institute held a spring social at The Tasting Room in Chicago, where graduates from all programs gathered to catch up and reconnect.

Nancy Jensen and Jan Koushaut, graduates of the two-year training program

Mary Nelson (CPSY, 2003) and Mark Hoffman

Nancy Jensen and Jan Nussbaum, graduates of the two-year training program

Gretchen King, Deirdre Koldyke and Karen Krefman, 2001 graduates of the MFT program

Cheryl Rampage (TFI) and Brian Malinowski (MFT, 2005)

Margot Schneider, Leah Brennan and Ann Faulkner, 2007 graduates of the MFT program

SAvE THE DATE!
Friday, November 6, 2009
The Family Institute’s Fall Conference
Keynote Address: 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Workshop: 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Sue Johnson, PhD, will be presenting “The New Science of Love and Bonding,” a presentation and workshop on Emotionally-Focused Couple Therapy.

Alumni Association Annual Meeting
12:00-1:00 p.m.
Join us for lunch to discuss the Alumni Association’s recent activities and hear program updates about The Family Institute from President William Pinsof and Senior Vice President for Programs and Academic Affairs Cheryl Rampage. RSVP to Erin Conway at econway@family-institute.org.

40th Anniversary Celebration Reception
4:00-5:30 p.m.
Join Family Institute alumni from the past 40 years for a cocktail reception following the Conference. The Alumnus of the Year awards will be presented at this time. All are welcome to attend. RSVP to Erin Conway at econway@family-institute.org.

Commencement 2009

More than 100 students graduated from the Master of Science in Marital and Family Therapy program and the Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology program on June 20 at the Alice Millar Chapel on Northwestern’s campus.

Students gathered with faculty, staff and families to reflect on their time at The Family Institute and look ahead to the future.

Illinois Senator Christine Radogno, a graduate of The Family Institute’s two-year training program, spoke to the graduates about using the skills they have learned in all aspects of their lives but to particularly think about public service.

A Snapshot of the Class of 2010–2012

MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY

Size: 27
Mean Age: 25
Gender: 5 male; 22 female
Race & Ethnicity: 5 African/African American; 3 Asian; 2 Latino; International: 1 Pakistan; 1 Canada
Out-of-state: 22
In-state: 5
Mean GRE Score: 1090
Mean GPA: 3.65

COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

Size: 20 (Standard Program: 17; 2+ Program: 8)
Mean Age: 25
Gender: 3 male; 22 female
Race & Ethnicity: 2 African/African American; 2 Latino; Out-of-state: 16
In-state: 5
Mean GRE Score: 1118
Mean GPA: 3.43

Margaret Schneider, Leah Brennan and Ann Faulkner, 2007 graduates of the MFT program

Esther Shin and Nicole Gavigan (CPSY, 2005)
Science in Practice – Jay Lebow’s quest to advance research and practice

By Jay Lebow, PhD

Over the last few decades, the practice of family therapy, and more generally of psychotherapy and other forms of mental health treatment, has increasingly been influenced by science. Practice was principally grounded in theoretical perspectives and case studies. Today, most clinicians regard research as an important input. Yet the interface of science and practice has become a center of conflict between those who look to create a list of empirically-supported treatments and the critics of such an approach.

My viewpoint is that science must have a major role in informing practice, but that the relation of research and practice should never be thought of as a simple linear one in which research directs each nuance of practice. Research can point to patterns as to what is most effective well beyond the awareness of an individual practitioner, but the practice of psychotherapy is far too complex and the factors that lead to change sufficiently idiosyncratic and subject to the specifics of the interaction of clients, therapist and setting so that clinical judgment and client preferences remain equally crucial factors.

I believe that science best informs practice through building a base in well-established effective principles of practice that transcend specific methods rather than simply creating lists of effective treatments. I also believe that science can best inform practice by helping increase therapists’ knowledge of such broad aspects of life as family patterns, individual personality and psychopathological disorders, helping therapists better understand the various aspects of the human condition that becomes the foci in psychotherapy. Over my career, I have served in summarizing research and translating and disseminating it in forms that clinicians can understand so that science can have more impact on practice. At present, I am involved in a number of related efforts with this goal in mind.

- Co-authored a book with Doug Spenckle, PhD, and Sean Davis that builds on the evidence for the importance of common factors shared by all treatments in couple and family therapy.
- Produced an entry for UpToDate, the physician evidence-based medicine resource, reviewing what is effective in psychotherapeutic treatment of various mental health problems.

Working on developing criteria for establishing the effectiveness of couple and family therapies with several colleagues from the Division of Family Psychology of the American Psychological Association.

- Lead author for the American Association of Marital and Family Therapy’s decade review of the effectiveness of couple therapy.
- Write a column for the Psychotherapy Networker.
- Wrote Research for Psychotherapists to help therapists understand the latest developments in research and distinguish between what is substance from exaggerated claims about research.

Revisiting The Family Institute model with William Pinsof, PhD, Doug Breunlin, LCSW, and Bill Russell, LCSW, now with a greater emphasis on drawing from research to inform practice.

Exploring what I believe to be the single best way of research-informed practice: feedback to therapists in the Psychotherapy Change project, headed by Dr. Pinsof.

I hope all these efforts might contribute to there being more science in practice and therapists becoming better informed consumers of research findings.

Jay Lebow, PhD, LMFT, AIPP, is a licensed clinical psychologist, licensed marital and family therapist and research consultant at The Family Institute. He has maintained a large clinical practice in individual, couple and family therapy for more than 30 years. Dr. Lebow is also involved in ongoing treatment research at The Family Institute concerned with assessing progress in psychotherapy and the development of the Systemic Therapy Inventory of Change (STIC). Contact Dr. Lebow at jlebow@family-institute.org.

1. Keep Organized
   Think of yourself as an office manager: for things to run smoothly, schedules must be coordinated, supplies purchased and equipment working. A comprehensive family calendar listing each person’s commitments can help keep everyone on the same page. When it comes to homework, encourage your child to use a checklist or notebook to keep track of assignments and a “homework folder” to transport them to and from school.

2. Establish a Routine
   Children crave consistency and predictability, knowing “what comes next” is very reassuring to them. Review fall schedules with your children, set regular times for going to sleep and waking up, and discuss how they can occupy their time after school, especially with regard to completing homework. If there will be a change in routine, try to give your child advanced notice.

3. Set Reasonable Expectations
   The fall is chock-full of changes, and it is important to remember that people adapt at different rates. Be patient and flexible and remind yourself on those bad days that your child is not “out to get you.” Where holidays are concerned, you will save yourself and your child a lot of frustration if you keep your expectations about behavior realistic. In other words, a rambunctious child who is unable to sit calmly through ordinary family meals will probably have a hard time getting through Thanksgiving dinner.

4. Monitor Stress
   Soccer, Spanish, piano, chess — the array of extracurricular choices can be overwhelming. Think carefully about how many activities you and your child can handle — on top of homework, play dates and birthday parties. Telltale signs of stress include fatigue, irritability and frequent complaints. When possible, try to avoid overscheduling and instead schedule daily downtime where relaxation is the goal. Declining a social invitation once in a while may yield a peace of mind that is far sweeter than a piece of birthday cake.

5. Utilize Humor
   When the going gets tough, get a little goofy! Not only does humor lighten a tense mood, it can also offer respite from an intractable problem and help keep troubles in perspective. Perhaps family members can bring a joke to the dinner table, recite silly rhymes about their name or pepper conversations with puns. In addition, children may be more responsive to parents’ directions if the task is transformed into a fun game.

6. Make Time for Each Other
   With the hustle and bustle of the fall, carving out special time to spend with family members may seem like a nearly impossible task. However, these shared moments are well worth the effort. Family dinners, bedtime chats and movie nights, for example, can solidify relationships, foster a positive self-concept, offer opportunities to recharge and restore, provide chances for checking in and simply be fun.

7. Stay Healthy
   As my wise grandmother used to say, “health is life’s greatest wealth.” When you take care of your and your family’s mental and physical health — through appropriate eating, sleep and exercise — much can be accomplished. You will be well on your way to achieving balance in this stressful season.

Maintaining Balance Through the Fall

By Aryn Froum, PhD

Along with the changing colors of the leaves, the fall inevitably brings changes to the lives of families with young children. Attempting to adjust to a new school year, extracurricular activities and social opportunities pose challenges for any family. Add in the fall holiday celebrations, and your plate becomes even fuller. Below are strategies for striking a balance during this exciting and exhausting time of year:

- Keep Organized
- Establish a Routine
- Set Reasonable Expectations
- Monitor Stress
- Utilize Humor
- Make Time for Each Other
- Stay Healthy
Emotionally Focused Therapy – The Family Institute presents Dr. Sue Johnson

Dr. Sue Johnson is the keynote speaker at our annual Fall Conference. Her presentation, “Creating Connection in Couple Therapy: The New Science of Love and Bonding,” discusses how Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFT) offers a unique perspective on how to use the power of emotion and the new science of adult attachment to create significant, lasting change in couple relationships. This approach to helping couples build more loving relationships has been taught and studied around the world and is becoming one of the foremost approaches in couple therapy today. In May, Dr. Johnson will present an evening workshop with The Family Institute, training therapists on EFT.

In anticipation of her upcoming Family Institute event, we asked Dr. Johnson to introduce herself and her research.

1. What is Emotionally Focused Therapy (ETF)?

Emotionally Focused Therapy (ETF) is a very successful, scientifically-tested approach to helping couples step out of frustration and isolation and into a more loving, secure emotional bond. It is the only approach based on the new science of adult bonding. ETF sheds light on the “mystery” of romantic love and the “reasoning” behind our deepest emotions.

2. How does your way of thinking about couple therapy differ from other approaches?

ETF differs as it is validated by 20 years of empirical research. It is used and tested with many different kinds of couples, problems and populations. We use emotion, the most powerful element in a love relationship, to create change in a couples ability to connect, rather than sidelinin or negating it.

3. What are the goals of ETF?

ETF is based on clear, explicit conceptualizations of marital distress and adult love. There are three goals with ETF:

- To expand and re-organize key emotional responses.
- To create a shift in partners’ interactional positions and initiate new cycles of interaction.
- To foster the creation of a secure bond between partners.

4. How has the field of couple therapy changed over the past 20 years?

The field changed in that it has begun to be a scientific discipline rather than just a set of techniques or ideas about love. We have to understand love before we can shape it.

5. What do you like to do in your free time?

I live in Ottawa with my husband, two children and dog. I adore Gilbert and Sullivan, Monty Python, Argentine tango and kayaking on Canada’s northern lakes.

For more information on Dr. Johnson, please visit her website, holdmetight.com.

Dr. Johnson is Director of the Ottawa Couple and Family Institute and the International Center for Excellence in Emotionally Focused Therapy as well as Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Ottawa and Research Professor at Alliant University in San Diego. Dr. Johnson’s best known professional books include Hold Me Tight (2008), The Practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy: Creating Connection (2004) and Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy with Trauma Survivors (2002).

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Tell us a little bit about yourself.

A

I have practiced Family Law at Jenner & Block in Chicago for more than 30 years. Through my work, I first became acquainted with Bill Proof and The Family Institute in the mid-80s. Over the years since then, Bill and his colleagues have helped many of my clients and their families through difficult times. I have seen with my own eyes the magic they can do with families in distress, and I have come to know and appreciate The Family Institute as a unique and outstanding organization.

What attracted you to The Family Institute?

A

Informed both by seeing the work of highly skilled family therapists and by my own experience as a child of divorce, I have learned to approach family problems and disputes with a keen sense of responsibility. I truly believe that the family is the foundation of our society. No organization or institution is more crucial to personal happiness, development of individual potential and our futures as a people. Since joining the Board in 2003, I have been privileged to be part of such a dedicated team committed to its mission of strengthening and healing families from all walks of life.

What do you hope to accomplish during your tenure as Board Chair?

A

As incoming Chair, I eagerly look forward to the challenges we face in achieving our mission and the highest standards of excellence, and in this way, ensuring that The Family Institute maintains its well-deserved reputation as the premier organization of its kind — anywhere. I am sincerely grateful to have the full support of my loving wife, Sheila, our amazing daughters, Maureen and Abby, and my generous and caring law partners.

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

A

My husband Rick and I met when we were both single parents, each with two children. Rick was a commodities trader and I was an attorney for the Chicago Board of Trade (and, as Rick likes to point out, he wasn’t in trouble!) Along with our five children, Rick and I will soon celebrate the 14th anniversary of our blended Kennedy-Riechers family. Jayna and Andrea are now adults, Erin is a sophomore in college, Scott a junior in high school and Joel is in the sixth grade.

What attracted you to The Family Institute?

A

Shortly after our marriage, I endeavored to learn as much as I could about our new, unique family system and how Rick and I could help our children develop compassion, character and the ability to face the inevitable obstacles that lie ahead. The desire for tangible, easy-to-understand information and guidance led me to The Family Institute’s wonderfully informative Circle of Knowledge luncheons that so many of us continue to enjoy to this day. Around that time, and with the unwavering support of my family, I also returned to Loyola University School of Law, received an LLM in Child and Family Law and have worked as a child advocate, in one form or another, ever since. This latter experience introduced me to the incredibly talented Jim Feldman and the outstanding clinical service provided by The Family Institute to a wide variety of families of every description.

What do you hope to accomplish during your tenure as Board Vice Chair?

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I’m honored to have the privilege of working with The Family Institute’s dedicated board members and leadership team and look forward to helping the Institute cultivate the resources necessary to continue providing the excellent clinical service, community outreach, education and groundbreaking research that so effectively and reliably strengthens and heals families from all walks of life.”
The mission of The Family Institute at Northwestern University is to strengthen and heal families from all walks of life through clinical service, community outreach, education and research.

The Family Institute at Northwestern University, founded in 1968, is a premier organization dedicated to couple and family therapy, community outreach, education and research. In addition to our community sites, we have four staff practice locations, including Evanston, Chicago, LaGrange Park and Northbrook. For more information on our staff practice, please call 847-733-4300 or visit our website at www.family-institute.org.