

# *Life Transitions Newsletter*

*December 2007*



*Dear Clients,*

*This newsletter provides on updates on treatments for depression, selecting a stop smoking program and caffeine.*

*Wishing you all happy holidays and a peaceful New Year!*

*Sincerely,*

*Penny Blazej, LCSW, BCD*

## *What are the Latest Updates on Depression Treatments?*

Dr. Yapko, an expert in hypnosis and depression noted in his latest newsletter an outstanding study that concludes that psychotherapy is key in the treatment of depression.

The article compares psychotherapy with antidepressants. The authors, Hal Arkowitz and Scott Lilienfeld, after an extensive review of the literature conclude that psychotherapy is as effective as antidepressants without the complicating

side effects of medication. They also cite that using antidepressants with psychotherapy is also an effective treatment plan. The key is that using antidepressants by themselves does not cure depression. As Dr. Yapko states: “*Just prescribing an antidepressant medication to someone will have to be considered a substandard treatment*”.

## HERB: RHODIOLA ROSEA

There has been increased coverage of this ancient herb in the media, including an article in Oprah Magazine. This herb has been studied in the Slavic Countries since before 1800's. Its main use is to enhance mood, energy level and mental clarity. Supporters claim that sufferers of depression, stress-related disorders, cancer and other fatigue-inducing ailments may benefit from taking this herb. There are few reported side effects. People with Bipolar Disorder should not take this drug because it may induce a manic episode. The herb is a stimulant and may be beneficial for people with low energy. Much has been said about this herb with over 99,500 hits on the Internet. The normal dose is 200-600 mg/day (it has been reported that the toxic level in humans is 235,000 mg).

After reviewing the studies done, my conclusion is that large scale clinical trials are needed before any generalized claim can be made. Remember, just because it is called an herb does not mean it does not have powerful chemical effects when taken. Like any medication, it is important that your full physical condition be taken into consideration especially other medications that you may be taking.

**NET:** check with your physician **BEFORE** taking this herbal medication.

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For more detailed information go to  
[www.herbalgram.org](http://www.herbalgram.org).

## *What is the latest research on techniques to stop smoking?*

At a recent assembly of the American College of Chest Physicians, researchers from the North Shore Medical Center in Massachusetts presented the results of a 26-week intervention study that compared different smoking cessation techniques.

The North Shore team recruited nearly 70 smokers who had been treated for cardiopulmonary conditions – that is, conditions that affect both the heart and lungs simultaneously. All of the subjects expressed a desire to quit smoking.

Subjects were divided into four groups:

- 1) One group received a series of hypnotherapy sessions  
**50% success rate**
- 2) One group received nicotine replacement  
**16% success rate**
- 3) One group received nicotine replacement combined with hypnotherapy  
**50% success rate**
- 4) One group was made up of subjects who said they preferred to quit on their own, "cold turkey"  
**25% success rate**

Clearly the groups that underwent hypnosis had higher success rates. The results of this study support other studies that conclude that hypnosis for stop smoking has the best success rate compared to other techniques.

Other studies have claimed success rates higher than 60%.

When you take into consideration that hypnosis has no side effects, like Nicolette gum ( may interact with other drugs, and potential side effects include diarrhea, dizziness, joint and muscle pain, rash, swelling of the face, and "burning" sensation at the application site.) Hypnosis is the better choice.

## *Is Caffeine the most abused drug in America?*

Yes, caffeine is the most abused drug in America. National Geographic January 2005 issue carried an excellent article on caffeine, "Why We Love Caffeine" that is certainly worth reading.

**NET:** caffeine is addictive and not good for us. Cutting back or eliminating caffeine from our diets is a good idea. For mental health, caffeine can significant increase anxiety. Hence, if you have anxiety it is wise to stay away for caffeine. Remember, look for the hidden caffeine like in the new healthy energy drinks, chocolate, green teas and hot coco.

You can get further information at [www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine).

## *Book Recommendations*

The below two books are excellent additions to your anatomy and physiology library. They have outstanding easy to understand illustrations:

*Women's Health and Wellness*  
– *An illustrated guide*. Foreword by Elena Kamel, MD. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

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*Anatomy & Pathology 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. The World's Best Anatomical Charts.*  
Lippincott Williams & Wilkins

Dr. Michael Yapko's new CD "Calm Down" is a self-help program for managing anxiety. To obtain a copy go to [www.yapko.com](http://www.yapko.com). If you want to borrow a copy, there is one in my office.

*The Art of Aging* by Sherwin B. Nuland (author of the best seller "How We Die") is an outstanding book on how to age is a positive and productive way. Through various examples, citing both famous and regular folks, Dr. Nuland emphasizes four main components to aging well: keep physically active, look forward to the next day, keep your life full and help others.

This book was recommended by one of you ... thanks for the great recommendation! If anyone else has a good read to recommend please let me know [pblazej@vcweb.org](mailto:pblazej@vcweb.org).

## *Announcements*

Last month I was recertified as a **Board Certified Diplomat in Clinical Social Work**, a prestigious national credential for advanced clinical social workers for the sixth year in a row. Issued by the American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work (ABE), the BCD is annually renewable based on high levels of professional achievement and maintenance of state licensure in good standing.

In addition, I am proud to announce that I have been accredited by The American Society of Clinical Hypnosis qualifying for one of the highest **Certification in Clinical Hypnosis**. This process took over five years to accomplish and I was able to be

clinically supervised by one of the world's leaders in hypnosis, Dr. Michael Yapko.

## *Public Events*

A few weeks ago I went to see the "Bodies – The Exhibition" at 4425 La Jolla Village Drive in San Diego. This is a must see exhibition that showcases sections of real human bodies giving you the opportunity to see what makes up our body. I was truly amazed! You can get tickets by calling 1-877-BODIES-5 or go online at [www.bodiestickets.com](http://www.bodiestickets.com).

## *Wise Words*

Bob Hope was asked the following question – Who would want to live to 100 years of age? Without hesitation he replied, "Someone who is 99." This was just before his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday!

