



# Valley Center Counseling, Inc.

## *Life Transitions Newsletter: November 2008*



*Dear Clients,*

*As the holidays approach please take time for yourself and family. It is all too easy to get caught up in the "To dos" and forget that holidays are about enjoying our loved ones. Also with the economic strain that the majority of you are facing, why not make homemade gifts from things that are already in your home. With a little creativity, it is amazing what can be done with some paint and a shoe box!*

*This month Valley Center Counseling is offering free depression evaluations - which include a 55 minute session. Read below for details. Help pass the word to others.*

*We have also launched a new website. Please check it out [www.pennyblazej.com](http://www.pennyblazej.com). Let me know what you think.*

*Happy Thanksgiving!*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Blazej'. To the right of the signature, the text 'LCSW, BCD' is printed in a smaller font.

*Penny Blazej, LCSW, BCD  
President of Valley Center Counseling*

### *Do You Have Depression?*

**What is depression?** Depression isn't a weakness, nor is it something that you simply "*snap out of*." Depression is a medical illness that involves the mind and body. It affects how you think and behave and can cause a variety of emotional and physical problems. You may not be able to go about your usual daily activities, and depression may make you feel as if life just isn't worth living. It is a chronic illness that requires treatment, much like diabetes or high blood pressure. There are three main causes for depression: biochemical, genes and environment.

**Who gets depression?** Depression is one of the most common health conditions in the world. It can occur at any age, in any race, in any social or economic class, or any gender. Depression is 1.5-3 times more common among family members. Certain medical conditions are associated with depression. For example: 20-25% of individuals with diabetes, myocardial infarction, carcinomas, stroke, or hypothyroidism, will develop depression. Depression is twice as common in females as males. In prepubertal children, males and females are equally affected. Rates are highest in the 25-44 year old age group.

### **How do you know if you have depression?**

When your family, friend(s) and/or doctor(s) are recommending you seek help. Ok if you answer yes to more than three of the below statements, you may be suffering from depression:

- It hurts too much and life seems hopeless
- I feel isolated from others or I'm not taking care of myself
- Even the smallest decision or conflict causes me great anger or anxiety
- My performance at work has decreased

- Crying spells for no apparent reason
- Problems sleeping
- Thoughts of suicide or suicidal behavior
- My relationships are in trouble
- The normal joys of life are passing me by
- I am focusing too much on my next drink or pill
- I have had more than one major loss in the last 12 months
- My loved one or I am facing a life-threatening illness
- Someone I love has died and I have lost purpose in life.

### **What types of treatments are available?**

Effective diagnosis and treatment can help reduce even severe depression symptoms. And with effective treatment, most people with depression feel better, often within weeks, and can return to daily activities they previously enjoyed. There are a wide variety of treatments for depression including: psychotherapy, exercise, herbs like St. John's Wart, antidepressants, hypnosis and EMDR or a combination of these. The majority of studies show that the most successful treatment is psychotherapy with antidepressants.

**How do you screen for depression?** During the month of November, Valley Center Counseling will be offering **free depression screening**. The screen will involve answering some questions and speaking to a therapist. At the end of the evaluation you should know whether you have depression and what sort of treatment options are best for you. To set-up a free 55 minute screening, call us at 760-685-3403.

### **Shorts**

- Hypnosis is a well validated treatment for acute and chronic pain. It has been found capable of reducing inflammation, altering blood flow, and procuring beneficial effect when hypnotic suggestions are provided during and prior to surgery. *Page 101*

*October issue of the American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis.*

- The U.S. Task Force on Community Preventive Services recommends individual cognitive behavior therapy to reduce psychological harm to youth who have been exposed to traumatic event(s). *September issue of Preventive Medicine.*

### **Announcements**

- ✚ After much dedicated work from Aurora Systems and Will Edwards, Inc. we have launched a new interactive website. You will have access to all past editions of Life Transitions Newsletters, presentations and book reviews. Check it out at [www.pennyblazej.com](http://www.pennyblazej.com). Let me know what you think.
- ✚ The Mental Health Parity Act of 2008 will end health insurance benefits inequity between mental health/substance use disorders and medical/surgical benefits for group health plans with more than 50 employees. A group health plan (or coverage) that provides out-of-network coverage for medical/surgical benefits must also provide out-of-network coverage, at parity, for mental health/substance use disorder benefits. For most plans, this will mean an effective date of 749-1477 January 1, 2010.

### **Wise Words**

*"Whenever you're in doubt about whether you should let bygones by bygones, remember that God has let some of your "bys" be gone. Forgive."* Unknown.

### **Just for laughs**

A cabbie picks up a Nun. She gets into the cab, and notices that the VERY handsome cab driver won't stop staring at her. She asks him why he is staring. He replies: *'I have a question to ask you but I don't want to offend you.'* She answers, *'My son, you cannot offend*

*me. When you're as old as I am and have been a nun as long as I have, you get a chance to see and hear just about everything. I'm sure that there's nothing you could say or ask that I would find offensive.' 'Well, I've always had a fantasy to have a nun kiss me.' She responds, 'Well, let's see what we can do about that: #1, you have to be single and #2, you must be Catholic.' The cab driver is very excited and says, 'Yes, I'm single and Catholic!' 'OK' the nun says. 'Pull into the next alley.' The nun fulfills his fantasy, with a kiss that would make a hooker blush. But when they get back on the road, the cab driver starts crying. 'My dear child,' says the nun, 'why are you crying?' 'Forgive me but I've sinned. I lied and I must confess, I'm married and I'm Jewish.' The nun says, 'That's OK. My name is Kevin and I'm going to a Halloween party.'*

### *Breathing Space*



*Sunset in Southern Africa*