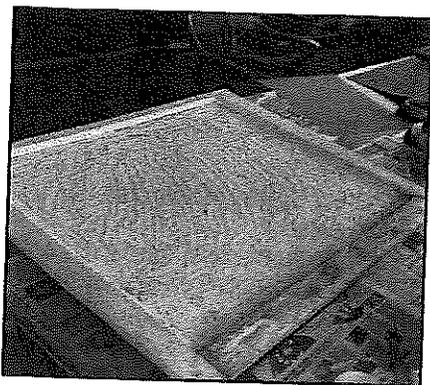


Enhancing Lives through Creative Expression

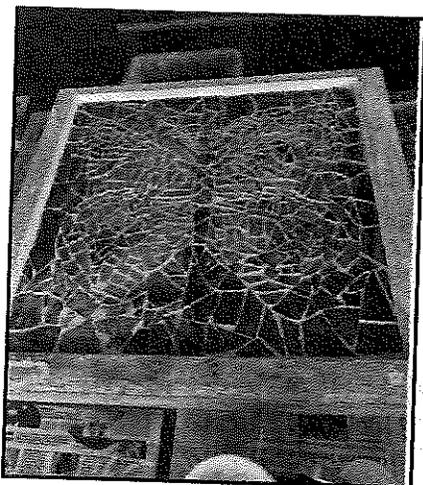
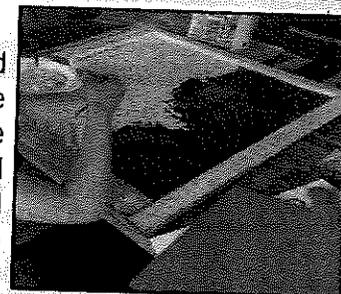


When you think of counseling for behavioral health issues you probably think of a counselor sitting in a room with a client listening and discussing individual problems. That can be one form, but there is also one that involves, painting, sculpture, wood working, writing poems, dance or drama. These are the Expressive Arts which can help those who struggle with mental health and addiction problems.

The Expressive therapies are the use of visual art, music, dance/movement, drama, poetry/creative writing, play and sand tray within the context of rehabilitation and healthcare. Expressive therapies are often referred to as "integrative approaches" because they are used in combination with other forms of treatment. Each form of expressive therapy has its unique properties and roles in therapeutic work depending on its application, practitioner, client, setting and client objectives.

A child who has limited language or a person who has lost the ability to talk due to stroke, or a trauma victim who may be unable to put ideas into speech, can still be involved in expression through the arts as a way to share with others without using words. Often times words are added to the experience as a more detailed explanation of symptoms emerge that may not have otherwise been understood. This way of communicating often becomes a supplemental way of communication in treatment.

These "action therapies" are action-oriented methods that assist people to explore issues and communicate their thoughts and feelings; the participant is very active in the therapeutic process. The experience of doing, making and creating can help people redirect attention and focus on ways to alleviate emotional stress. Expressive arts assist one in discovering and developing corrective solutions that ultimately lead to change and resolution.



The creative process may help individuals gain a greater sense of community among peers, reflect on challenges faced in life, develop positive new relationships, experience a greater independence and self-empowerment, learn coping and communication skills, discover new talents and regain meaning in life through artistic expression.

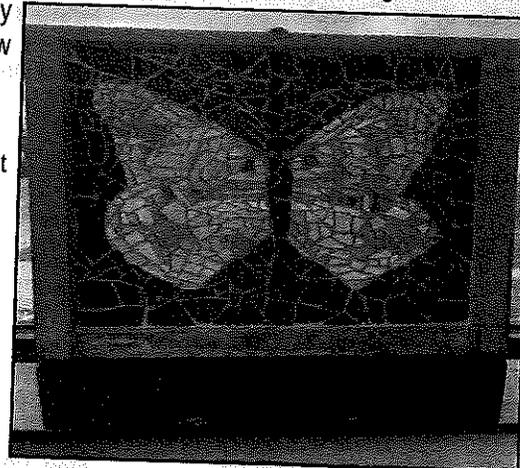
One recent client was abusing drugs, had serious medical issues and suffered trauma as a youth. "I used drugs and alcohol as a way to escape and numb the intense emotions. I was in complete denial that anything was wrong. Now as I go through treatment and Expressive Arts I can see that by

the positive choices I am learning to make in my life that I can actually show compassion for myself and others," explained a client.

A Renewed Mind has a dedicated Expressive Arts studio on Adams Street in Toledo. Contact: skepford@arenewedmindservices.org.

Shelly Kepford, MA, LSW
Director, Expressive Arts

A Renewed Mind can be reached at www.arenewedmindservices.org or toll free 1.877.515.5505 for counseling and EAP resources.



Breaking The Cycle Of Negative Thinking And Behavior

MATTHEW D. RIZZO
PRESIDENT AND CEO
A RENEWED MIND

I recently read an article that compared anxiety to a hamster wheel . . . lots of energy expended, but it gets you nowhere. Any cycle of thinking or behavior that exerts that same level of energy with no direction or purpose will eventually lead to an unhealthy outcome, be it relational, spiritual, psychological or physical.

There is good news, however. Negative cycles have been and continue to be broken. Consider these four simple steps.

First, become aware of the negative cycle. Without having an awareness that a negative cycle of thinking or behavior exists, one cannot even begin to change. Negative cycles are often hidden in our blind spot and protected by personal defense mechanisms. Some common examples of defense mechanisms include denial, rationalizing or blaming. While there is a wide variety of defense mechanisms, they share a common end point: unchanged thinking and behavior.

In other words, being

stuck means the defense mechanism is doing its job.

Thankfully, we have a God who cares and has a sense of humor. His secret weapon to overcome any defense mechanism that will expose our blind spot: our children. I once heard a pastor say it best in a sermon: When God can't get through to you to bring about a positive habitual or character change, he sends you a son or daughter just like you to open your eyes.

Isn't that the truth? A living self-portrait! Seeing a belief or behavior in another person, especially someone we love, can open our eyes to our blind spots.

Other times, unfortunately, it takes a traumatic event to raise the awareness we need to break a negative cycle in our life. A breakup, a poor medical report, job loss, accident or legal incident - like getting an Operating a Vehicle Impaired (OVI) charge can painfully, yet quickly, call to attention a negative cycle of thinking or behavior.

Secondly, to change, one must possess the will to do so. Some call it chutzpah, desire, grit or determination, but it takes a commitment to

change which can only be controlled by the one making the change. So fuel your desire.

The third step to breaking a cycle of negative thinking or behavior includes gaining the know-how or skill set to change.

Ponder this: One does not wake up and decide to run a marathon. It takes not only desire, but training and knowledge. If, for instance, you struggle with getting angry too easily, then learning relationship techniques, positive self-talk and meditation are useful tools to address this.

There are lots of resources available to break negative thinking and destructive behaviors. My personal preference is to gain education from a person you trust who has overcome what you might be struggling with.

Finally, aware of your negative cycle of thinking or behavior, desiring to change, armed with the knowledge to change, the fourth step is having an ability.

It's been my experience that not every person has the ability to put into practice what they want to do, even if they have the desire and knowledge to do it. I personally would love to be a pilot but lack the sharp eyesight to do it. Also, there are times when systemically, one does not have the opportunity or ability to achieve things one would like to achieve. So seeking professional help is wise.

The four steps to breaking a negative cycle will work, but it's important to remember that if you want to maintain this change, consider reinforcing your progress.

Former football coach Urban Meyer said it best when he said, "What gets rewarded, gets repeated." So reward yourself when you make progress to keep it going. An accountability partner can help maintain change as well.

Breaking the cycle of neg-

ative thinking and behavior is possible. The book written by Jeffrey Hiatt, ADKAR (for awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement) is an added resource to assist with breaking negative cycles in your life, professionally or personally. I have seen it work in many people and believe that the four steps outlined will serve as a simple but impactful way for making the changes needed.