

November/December 2013

Edited by Purva Patel

HAMFT Newsletter

TAMFT Celebrates 40-Year Anniversary



Treviario, the site of HAMFT's Awards Banquet, See Page 3

By Joan Collins Harwood
2013 HAMFT President

With the close of the year coming up for all of us, we have many blessings to count, not the least of which is that we will be keeping our LMFT licenses.

The Texas Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, which gives us a voice in the Texas legislature, will be hosting its Annual Conference in Sugar Land, March 6th-8th, 2014 at the Marriott Town Square.

TAMFT's 2014 Annual Conference will mark forty years of service to the mental health professionals of Texas and the clients that they serve. They will offer all of the classic features

that make TAMFT's events the most uniquely enjoyable: CEU opportunities, as well as many special features that will be included to commemorate this milestone.

HAMFT will be posting volunteer opportunities for members wishing to volunteer during the conference.

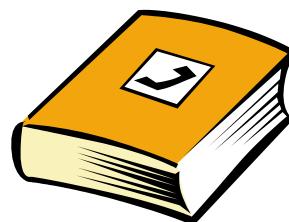
We hope that as many members of HAMFT as we have can attend!



Sugar Land's Town Square Marriott

Call for 2013 HAMFT Board Members!

Would you like to serve on the board of the Houston Association of Marriage and Family Therapists? Several positions are available for the upcoming year. Please contact president-elect Anne Way at away@interface-samaritan.com if you are interested. Positions are possibly available in membership, programs, elections, public relations, ethics and others.



Have News?

Submit articles, office space for rent, job openings, books and upcoming professional events by your practice or agency to newsletter@hamft.org. Job postings are free!

Is your information up to date? Potential clients and referral sources use the HAMFT directory online to contact therapists. Make sure your information is up to date by logging on to the member lodge at the HAMFT [web site](#).

Are you invisible? Clinicians offer marketing tips.

By Christen Geron

Marketing your services can be a challenge for some therapists. It is especially hard for newly licensed therapists who may expect a swarm of new clients post graduation. It takes a considerable amount of time to build a consistent, reliable client base.

The following are four valuable tips to successfully marketing your practice, making yourself more visible, and thus gaining more clients.

Tip #4: Establish a niche

If you want to be more than just a general therapist, then work on specializing with a particular population and advertise yourself as such. For example, if you are fond of working with children, then engage in workshops that will advance your knowledge of working with kids. Then network with schools and pediatricians in your area, advise them of the services you offer for children, and hopefully those contacts will become good referral sources for you. If you become known in your area as “the therapist that works with kids”, then you will have an advantage over the other non-specialty therapists in your area.

“Although WE know that family therapists are the most versatile and well-trained clinicians, the general population does not. It is important to let the world know what your practice focus is, and work from there,” said Sherry Duson, LMFT, LPC, who has been in private practice for fourteen years.



Got Shoes?

Donate new or gently used shoes to The Beacon at 1212 Prairie Street, Houston, Texas 77002. The shelter is especially in need of men's shoes in sizes 9-14, according to HAMFT board member Grayson Miller.

Tip 3: Use word of mouth

When therapy has made a lasting impression on your clients, they tend to tell the people around them how you helped them. It also helps to market yourself through the people you already know. New licensees should tell all of their family and friends that they are newly licensed and looking for clients.

“Current clients refer new clients. Clients referred by other clients are the BEST way to get referrals. This means you're providing your clients with a beneficial therapeutic experience,” said Andrea Baker, LMFTA.

Tip 2: Network

Before the internet existed, networking was the #1 most important tool to market yourself. Today it is still extremely important. You have to put yourself out there within the professional community in your area and make them aware of your #4 (area of expertise).

To make yourself visible, you have to go to events, don't be afraid to introduce yourself, and meet your colleagues. Try other things outside the box like offering to make a presentation, put on a workshop, or write an article. Do things that will get your name out there. Also do things you enjoy and network with people you like.

“I also ‘show up’ to as many networking events as possible, where I find ideas, referral sources, and burn-out prevention,” said Melany J. Morrison, LMFT, LPC, CGP.

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Office Space Available!

Office space available on Mondays in Energy Corridor area. The office is newly refurbished and shared by several therapists. The available space is furnished. Amenities include Wi-Fi, fax, coffee bar, refrigerator, and a furnished waiting room. Contact Catherine Casey for details at (281) 686-9569.

You are cordially invited to the
Houston Association
for
Marriage and Family Therapy
Awards Banquet



Saturday, January 18th, 2014
at 7 p.m.

Register on
<http://www.hamft.org>

T R E V I S I O

Cash Bar
Dancing
Vegan Options
Free Parking

6550 Bertner Street, 6th Floor of the Commons, Houston, Texas 77030 John P. McGovern Bldg.

How To Apply for A Warm Hearth Scholarship

The Warm Heart Fund, funded by HAMFT members, is accessible to all members, including students, whose application for assistance needs meets the following criteria:

1. The funds must be applied toward expenses for attendance at a professional development experience, including for personal growth.
2. The applicant manages whatever expenses they are able to pay and requests a Warm Hearth Scholarship to supplement that cost.
3. The applicant agrees to write, following attendance at the professional development experience, a brief description of the workshop and the meaning it had for the participant, and offer the description for inclusion in the HAMFT Newsletter.

When a request for funds is approved, 75% of the requested costs may be allotted with a maximum cap of \$300.00 per application. Find the application at hamft.org

Marketing tip No. 1: Get online

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Tip 1: Get online

Having an online presence is the best way to make yourself visible to potential clients.

Psychologytoday.com is the #1 website preferred by clinicians that have a healthy flow of new clients (based on my research). It's an easy to start a profile and start getting calls that same day. Remember when writing your statement, or therapy philosophy: keep it simple. Your audience is a future client, not another colleague. Another online option is to develop your own website. Many established practices have a website for their business. Be sure to carefully design a pleasing and functional site. Feel free to search other well-known sites for guidance on format and design (but don't copy another professional's words).

"Clients with a TherapySites website also get a free Psychology Today profile. That profile has sent me the most online traffic, compared to Yelp, GoodTherapy.org, TheraVine, and others," said Brandon M. Wheeler, LMFT.

"Honestly, the most profitable marketing has been online listings," added Angela Sarafin, LMFT, LPC.

Whether you are just starting out, or have been



Christen Geron, MA, LMFT Associate, works as a couple and family therapist at Sarafin Family Therapy in Clear Lake.

in the business for a while, evaluate your marketing tactics. If you have been feeling invisible from clients, start doing something more about it. This is your career, your business, your livelihood. As Diana Carleton says, "*always* consider yourself promoting and marketing."

Seasoned clinicians offer advice to new therapists

By Sam Caplan

As a current student in the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at University of Houston Clear Lake, I have been honored to meet professionals in the field through my participation in the Houston Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. I find it beneficial to converse with these professionals on their interests and their career paths. We can take our education and utilize it in very diverse ways. To assist those starting their careers, I have compiled a series of quotes from local marriage and family therapists on what they wished they learned in school about being an LMFT.

“One thing they didn’t teach us in school is how to take this wonderful training and develop a plan to make us marketable and self-sufficient professionals. Everything I’ve learned about setting up a practice has come through trial and error and figuring it out by myself. There should be an optional course on business development for those who are interested.”
—Sherry Duson, M.A., LMFT-S, LPC-S

“I think interns or new LMFTA’s need to know that it is okay to see a therapist themselves. In fact, I would HIGHLY recommend it. I had already been in therapy before I entered graduate school. However, this is not something that was discussed very much in our program. I remember a class on dealing with impaired professionals, but I think that it does not have to get to this point. Self-care was certainly discussed in grad school, but individual therapy should be included more regularly in discussions on self-care.”
—Pierre Matta, M.A., LMFT-S

“I wish I had known how much of my education was just the tip of the iceberg...that I'd be studying, reading resources, and attending workshops for each different client who came through my door. And I still have so much to learn! Also, I truly wish that there was an optional class for the business aspects of our profession. There is a true pay gap between those with business and marketing savvy and those who are tentative to learn the business side of things.”
—Christie Farris, M.A., LMFT, LPC

“When I was in school, I didn’t realize that LMFTs were so undervalued in the field. That perspective is improving, but we still need to work on

promoting the LMFT licensure. Since graduation I've learned that the systems' perspective is much more beneficial to clients than strictly an individual focus.”
—Arlene Fisher, M.A., LMFT-S, LPC

“Before graduating, I wish I knew about searching for counseling jobs outside of the program's intern sites. I loved my intern site, and I loved working there after graduation. However, I now know about the job boards through the United Way of Greater Houston and the University of Houston's Graduate School of Social Work, both with wide-reaching employment opportunities. There are also corporate opportunities like Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). Students should expand their job search beyond the internship sites because the number of job openings at those sites is limited.”
—Brandon Wheeler, M.A., LMFT

“I wished I had learned more about the many ways in which we can collaborate with other professionals. My training seemed to focus on highlighting the aspects of our theoretical stances and clinical practices that set us apart from other mental health and medical professionals. I've found that this information, while interesting, is somewhat irrelevant and isolating in real-world practice. Some of my best post-graduate experiences have been my work with multidisciplinary teams in which each member contributes his or her expertise for the benefit of the team and client.”
—Dr. Matthew Brown, PhD, LMFT



Sam Caplan a Marriage and Family Therapy graduate student at UHCL. She is interning at Family Services of Greater Houston.

Working with Adolescents in Recovery

By Kim Jones

In the United States in 2012, “more than one quarter of adolescents drank alcohol, approximately one fifth used an illicit drug” (SAMHSA, 2013). According to the CDC, alcohol and other drug use among adolescents is a major public health problem, as “substance use and abuse can increase the risk for injuries, violence, HIV infection, and other diseases.”

The appropriate level of treatment for adolescent substance use or abuse will depend on the adolescent’s level of substance usage, which can be determined with help from assessment instruments.

Some clinicians consider adolescents to be a tough population to work with. In my experience, a more relaxed therapeutic stance can ease the joining process. This may mean more time spent joking around with the client initially, or even a more relaxed posture when speaking with the client. Martha Straus, author of *Adolescent Girls in Crisis*, provides several helpful recommendations for establishing a working therapeutic alliance with adolescents. Straus provides several questions that may be helpful in engaging adolescents:

- Who is the most important person in your life? Tell me about her or him.
- Where would you rather be right now, and what would you rather be doing there?
- What is something special that has happened to you in the last couple of days?

In my experience, a little validation from the clinician can go a long way. In my daily work, I frequently use phrases such as “That sounds really frustrating,” or “Wow, I think I



*Kim Jones, MA, LMFT Associate
is Lead Family Therapist at Teen
and Family Services of the
Woodlands.*

might feel upset if I was in that situation.” With some finesse, it is possible to validate the adolescent’s feelings in a way that does not condone harmful behavior or lead you to side with the adolescent against the parent.

Peer group importance

Although working with the family system is a key component of helping substance-abusing adolescents find recovery, the adolescent’s peer group is another system that will affect treatment outcomes. Peers are of paramount importance to adolescents. Thus, for an adolescent who is entering recovery, finding a peer group who is supportive of sobriety can be a key component of change.

For many adolescents in recovery, sobriety can sound very unappealing if that means sitting alone at home and reading books all weekend. Some adolescents entering recovery already have some peers that are supportive of his or her recovery. However, many adolescents entering recovery lack relationships with other adolescents who do not engage

in use of alcohol or other drugs. For that reason, assisting the adolescent in finding supportive peer relationships can be helpful.

Working with parents

Parents with a substance abusing adolescent may present with a variety of thoughts and feelings regarding their family’s substance abuse problem. Some may feel terror at the danger their child is experiencing, while others may be struggling with denial of the true nature and potential ramifications of their child’s drug and alcohol usage.

Regardless, an essential component of treating adolescent substance abuse is involving the parents in the recovery process. This may involve working on parenting skills, effective use of consequences, improving communication patterns, and increasing the parents’ own repertoire of self-care and coping skills.

Sources:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (August 29, 2013). *The CBHSQ Report: A Day in the Life of American Adolescents: Substance Use Facts Update*. Rockville, MD.

Adolescent and School Health. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Retrieved October 24, 2013, from <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/alcoholdrug/>

Straus, M. (2007). *Adolescent girls in crisis: Intervention and hope*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

The Importance of Time Together

By Allison Rencher

The other day I was reading a comment made by Dr. Mary Pipher. She said, "We need our families but we don't always behave well in them. We love and hate them, yearn for them deep in our bones and feel so disgusted with them that we want to spit (Pipher, 1996, p. 4)." That pretty much sums it up!

As therapists we need to understand these mixed feelings about families, know that they are not perfect, and work extensively to help them become what they can be. Pipher made it clear that the family is "our last great hope"(p. 10). How true that is! Through years of helping young women, I have consistently seen the need to strengthen the family in order to assist the teen to really heal and for the family to experience long term success after treatment.

One of the elements that Pipher identified as protective is being aware of the time spent together as a family. In our busy world it is important to be mindful about finding and spending time together. If we don't make the conscious choice to be together it usually doesn't happen.

The relationships that exist in the family need nourishment and attentiveness. At New Haven RTC one of the ways we strengthen families is family weekends—where they spent three days dedicated to their daughter and family. These weekends are full of group and family therapy, there are often many difficult topics covered, much laughter and tears shed.

These moments become a perfect opportunity for the families to learn the importance of time together being an element that can strengthen them as a family. For the first time, in what feels like ages,

parents and children spent time actually talking to each other at dinner. They do simple activities together that promote conversation and connection like painting, hiking, taking pictures, or playing board games. Parents and children pay less attention to their smart phones and focus on listening and understanding rather than appointments and text messages. These moments become precious memories to many of the families.

Parent weekends often include the opportunity to work or serve together as a family. Service provides a great time to work together. It provides the family with a chance to look beyond themselves and be closely involved in helping others. Service is an activity that we invite families to do in their communities at home as a method of maintaining connection.

We encourage families to find activities that they enjoy doing together as a family and make the time to do them. Finding time at home can often be a challenge. Life is busy. Hanging out with parents may not be the top priority for many adolescents—in fact it may be the one thing that gets avoided most. For each family determining what works for you is part of the challenge of protecting your family (Pipher). It would be difficult to recreate family weekends on an individual family level, however, elements can be replicated. Sitting down and determining what has worked in the past would be a good place to start.

Allison Rencher is an LMFT at New Haven Residential Treatment Center.

Give the gift of time to a child



The magic of the holidays isn't always magical for children in the CPS system. However, you can help change that for many of them this year. Mark your calendars for December 14 when HAMFT teams up with BEAR (Be A Resource for CPSs kids).

HAMFT members and their loved ones are invited to roll up their sleeves at the annual BEARING Gifts workshop in the Heights, where volunteers match a CPS child's holiday wish list with donated items to make their holiday wishes

come true. What better way to give back than to give the gift of time to a child in need. If you would like to volunteer, RSVP by email to Paige.Roane@gmail.com no later than November 20 indicating how many people will be volunteering with you as well as shift preference. Shifts are 9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. or 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. An RSVP is required to participate. The exact location will be provided to those who RSVP as soon as it is available.

Reflections of a budding therapist

By Lesley Anne Mendonca

As a fairly new therapist on the scene, I have found myself making vivid and frequent observations about our profession, and life as a licensed therapist. As far as I can tell, therapists are the world's best observers, philosophers, elucidators and healers. My hope in sharing some of my more resolute reflections is to reach the hearts of our hardworking, self-sacrificing Houston therapists – regardless of what stage of the journey you find yourself in. I offer my gratitude to the Houston community of therapists who continue to be some of the most balanced, centered and beautiful people our city has to enjoy!

Self-care really is as important as they said it would be.

In graduate school, the concept of self-care was made very familiar. However, the need for self-care takes on new depth as a therapist feels her inner landscape change with each new session. Empathy requires that we experience our own emotion so as to share in someone else's. We truly are opening ourselves up to each of our clients to share in their struggles. Self-care means more than scheduling time for a massage. It involves remembering **who we are** outside of our profession and nurturing our growth as unique *human beings*.

There is a palpable pressure to know the answers.

The nature of therapy involves clients coming to us with their "problems." The undeniable implication of therapy is that we, as clinicians, will have the answers. Good practice requires a thorough knowledge of family dynamics, diagnostic precision, proper ethical standards and cutting edge research. Perhaps, however, good practice also includes occasionally reminding ourselves that our job is not always to have the answers. Rather, we

are asked to be enlightened guides on the journey. Being a caring witness, after all, is one of the most valuable gifts we have to offer.

A little self-compassion goes a long way.

Any therapist worth his salt will encounter the value of teaching self-compassion in therapy. The real challenge, however, is in consistently applying those values to our own lives. Self-compassion isn't just for our own survival; it serves to enhance our practice, as well. A central element to therapy is that healing flows largely from within us. If that is true, self-compassion and self-acceptance are assets to each of us. The kindness we show ourselves can then be given outside of ourselves, thus making us better therapists.

"Thank goodness there's a therapist in the family!"

Some might say it is a bit tempting to tackle our personal relationships with our clinical training and insight. In other cases, we might notice our friends and family perceiving us differently as we grow our practice. Either way, it seems as though there is a post-licensure shuffle in the dynamics of our personal relationships. What continues to be a liberating agent in those shifting dynamics is seeing clearly the division between *growing therapist* and *imperfect human being*. In our personal relationships, we must have room to be us, and not "Us, LMFT." Perhaps it is okay to use our insight to improve our relational functioning where it is helpful. Of equal importance, however, is to give our inner therapist a break from taking notes so that we might enjoy the freedom of being exactly who we are!

With great power comes great responsibility.

There is a slight gratification that can sometimes manifest itself in the



Lesley Anne Mendonca, LMFT Associate, LPC Intern, practices at Fuller Life Family Therapy (Bellaire) and at the Family and Youth Institute (The Woodlands).

courageous trust our clients put in our training and insight. If we can complement gratification with humility, it's possible to become an even more powerful presence in the lives of our clients. As talented therapist Dr. Amy Fuller recently reminded me, "Humility is merely an honest assessment of who we are." As we continue our case staffing, diagnosing and treatment, it seems essential that we remember we are working with human beings, above all. We are not all that different from our clients. The humility we practice can lovingly change the lens through which we view our clients.

Don't forget to maintain your License in Creative Fun.

When appropriate, there is great value in having fun with our clients. Leaving room for creative intervention gives way for change and authentic connection. If part of your personality includes traits that aren't directly from the *handbook of traditional therapy*, consider bringing them into session when beneficial to the client. Doing so can bring the therapeutic alliance into stronger, more authentic connection. And it might just be exactly what your client needs!



EVENTS CALENDAR

November 8, 2013

Addictions and Recovery Workshop, Memorial Hermann Prevention and Recovery Center

1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Memorial Hermann PaRC, 3043 Gessner Houston, TX 77080

FREE for current HAMFT members. \$30.00 for non-members needing CEU's. \$15.00 for guests. Free parking.

This continuing education workshop will count as 3 CEU's toward the requirements of the Texas State Board of Examiners for therapists and counselors.

December 13, 2013

HAMFT Winter Holiday Party and Movie Night

6:30 PM – 9:00 PM

River Oaks Family Therapy, 7700 San Felipe Street, Suite 350, 77063

FREE for current HAMFT members. Drop by on your way to other Holiday Parties, or eat, drink, celebrate the end of the year and watch vintage Family Therapy movies with us!

December 14, 2013

HAMFT Volunteers at BEAR

9 AM – 11 AM or 11:30 AM – 2 PM.

Heights. Exact location will be sent to those who RSVP.

HAMFT is teaming up with BEAR (Be A Resource for CPS kids). HAMFT members and their loved ones are invited to roll up their sleeves at the annual BEARING Gifts workshop, where volunteers match a CPS child's holiday wish list with donated items to make their holiday wishes come true. RSVP by email to Paige.Roane@gmail.com no later than Nov. 20 indicating how many people will be volunteering with you as well as shift preference.



Members look on and work together during the September workshop on Culturally Responsive Therapy.

Not a member? Join now!

Membership comes with FREE:

- Monthly CEU opportunities
- Annual ethics workshop
- Lunch and networking at meetings
- Listing in HAMFT directory
- Community service opportunities
- HAMFT newsletter and email notices about workshops and legislative updates
- Eligibility for Warm Hearth financial assistance funds

Membership Dues:

1. Affiliate, 1 year: \$60
2. Affiliate, 2 years: \$100
3. Associate Member, 2 years, \$45
4. Clinical Members, 1 year, \$60 (LMFTs)
5. Clinical Members, 2 years, \$100
6. Student members, 3 years, \$35
7. Student member, 1 year, \$15

Visit HAMFT.org to become a member!

Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year!

Well, it doesn't quite feel like the holidays yet! Where did the cold go? As this Year in HAMFT comes to an end, I mainly think about how grateful I am for many people and things in my life, including my colleagues and friends that have served HAMFT faithfully this year. It has been such an honor serving you.

Thank you all for a wonderful year!

See you at the Banquet!

Joan Collins Harwood
MA, LMFT, LPC
2013 HAMFT President

