



Dear Friends of CCI,

Welcome to our third newsletter. In this volume, our editor and Board member Blake Hallanan interviews the staff and helps us to articulate what is unique about working at CCI. You'll get to meet our psychologist Dr. Carolyn Swearingen and hear from one of our clients who has benefited greatly from your contributions to the Client Assistance Fund.

This year, with the encouragement of our Board of Directors, we decided to expand our Intern program. For the first time in well over a decade, we have three post-Masters level psychotherapy interns. Maureen Fisher, MA, is beginning her third year. Darcy Lyon, MA, is beginning her second year. Our newest intern, Taryn Bernstein, MA, joined us in June 2010. Please go to the "staff" pages on our website, www.californiacounseling.org, to learn more about Maureen, Darcy and Taryn.

We are extremely fortunate and grateful to have these intelligent, kind, curious, empathic women on our team. Having Taryn on our staff has allowed us to significantly increase the number of low-fee clients we serve. Having Maureen stay for a third year allows her and her clients to have a richer, more nuanced experience of the deep and meaningful changes that can happen with long-term psychotherapy. We are exploring ways in which we can raise funds to pay our interns more than the small amount they currently receive. If you have ideas, please give me a call! The interns are an integral part of our mission and of the vibrancy at CCI.

On behalf of our Managing Director Meg Bloomfield and the therapists at CCI, thank you for your ongoing interest in and support of our work. Whether you give us your hard-earned money, your limited time, or your wishes for our success, your energy goes into helping someone you do not know to have a better life. Your act of faith is similar to throwing a pebble into a pond. You throw the pebble, and we get to witness the ripple effects. They are far reaching.

With gratitude,
Elaine Chan-Scherer
Executive Director and Psychotherapist
California Counseling Institute



Interns Darcy Lyon, Maureen Fisher, and Taryn Bernstein with Executive Director Elaine Chan-Scherer and Lulu

CCI: A Lesson in Harmony

"No one can whistle a symphony. It takes an orchestra to play it."

While all psychotherapy practices have in common their "study of the mind and soul," few can boast such a rich tapestry of teamwork, togetherness and common purpose as the California Counseling Institute exhibits day after day, week after week and year after year.

"Each of us brings a unique way of working, which offers our clients a wide range of choice," says therapist Brenda Wong. "But while we have a diversity of approaches, we come together with a unity of purpose to serve our community as well as support the growth of each of us as individuals." This unity, adds Brenda, creates an "alchemy of group intention of mind and heart, a very creative and healing energy that in turn gets passed onto our clients."

CCI also sets itself apart from other group practices because it is a non-profit organization, which accounts for some of its uniqueness. "That is a piece but a small piece," says Managing Director Meg Bloomfield. "When you look at CCI and other non-profits, you understand the underlying intent or mission is to lead people to living better and more fulfilling lives. At CCI this is through the integration of spirituality and psychotherapy. We are healers,

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Helping Those In Need - CCI's Client Assistance Fund(CAF)



CAF Profile - *Getting to the Other Side*

'MCF' had recently moved from Maryland to San Francisco to attend graduate school. She was studying hard to get her masters in nursing, was new to the area, hadn't yet had the time or energy to establish her own community, was having relationship challenges and all her money was going toward her education. "I needed some support," says MCF. "I needed to talk to someone who had some wisdom and could help me through my crisis."

Through some friends MCF heard about the Client Assistant Fund (CAF) at CCI. She chose to see Lynn Mannix (an original CCI therapist who is now in private practice). "I couldn't even afford to pay \$35 an hour so she agreed to see me for \$25. People who need help and support often don't have any financial resources," MCF says. "I really believe in a sliding scale, particularly for people in school."

MCF finished graduate school, became a Certified Nurse Midwife, and has been married to her then boyfriend for six years. "It meant a lot to have an experienced person invest in me at a time when I really needed support," says MCF who still sees Lynn (at a renegotiated fee) for "personal growth, work and relationship issues. Lynn serves as a rudder for me now. My therapy allows me to be more present for my patients and to take better care of myself as a caregiver. She helps keep me on my course."

Out of the 3,055 total hours worked by CCI therapists and interns as of September 1 of this year, 740 of those were CAF hours, representing 24 percent of total client hours. And 2,630 of the total hours worked are pro-bono, defined as clients who pay less than CCI's full fee for therapy. Pro-bono fees donated thus far in 2010 have totaled \$170,790 which already exceeds the 2009-year.

CCI works with individuals (including children and teens), couples, families and groups and is available for workshops and talks. It offers services in English, French, German and Cantonese. Fees are formally set with CAF clients on their first visit. One hundred percent of donations to the CAF provide direct assistance to low-fee clients. Raising funds for the CAF is the responsibility of the CCI Board. Without the generous support of those who have contributed, CCI would not be able to provide therapy to a great many of its clients.

"I send people to therapy all the time," says MCF. "It can make all the difference in a person's life at a critical time."

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not providers of a product. That is not to say that we intend to run the Institute at an operating loss, but making large profits is not part of our mission."

CCI weekly staff meetings are symbolic, says therapist Tina Smelser, "because we check in with each other. There is a deep care and concern between us. We are honoring every person's voice here." Tina points out that all CCI therapists have taken the MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) personality test to assure that everyone has been assigned an administrative role to get each one to do what they're good at. On staff birthdays, a card with everyone's signature is passed around and there are holiday rituals of picking names out of a hat for gift giving. "I think we all see our clients as 'CCI clients' as opposed to one therapist's client. We cover for each other," says Tina.

For therapist Julie Terraciano, the key words at

CCI are "collaborative contributions." "We hold one another in our consciousness when we're both healthy and weak. When I'm having a hard time, others can help. When things are difficult or I am facing issues affecting us or friends we take care of each other," says Julie. "There is more of our personal self involved because it is a stable and safe place."

"When I walk into CCI I feel it's a home not an office," says therapist Carolyn Swearingen. "Not only because of the space itself but because we are all represented in each of the rooms, from Elaine's pottery to Jana's artwork there are pieces of us everywhere." There is also a group consciousness, Swearingen says, in how the therapists affect each other, wanting to be intentional about their decision making process, their growth as a community, and their connection with each other. "The fact that we set aside time to check in with each other every week, and spend time together at the board retreat is very important."

For intern Darcy Lyon, CCI has “a common vision that is distinctly different from other practices. We are dedicated to integrating spirituality into psychology. That is the thread that links us as a unified field. All religions and expressions of inquiry into healing and purpose are honored.” But CCI’s focus on integrating psychotherapy and spirituality should not be confused with religious counseling. As intern Maureen Fisher points out, “We sometimes have clients who are trying to escape religion, and we offer a safe place for that to be explored as well.”

And for the newest intern, Taryn Bernstein, using conflict resolution in staff meetings to get through issues rates high on her list of appreciation. “I also like the fact that everyone had a say in whether or not I was hired,” says Bernstein. “It made me feel like I was really a part of the team.”

Carolyn Swearingen and The Art of Listening

Remember that person in junior high school you always confided in? The one who was an attentive listener, contributed astute observations that would never occur to you, and made you feel better after you talked to her? That was Carolyn Swearingen, who evolved her innate skills into a profession and is now a CCI psychologist.



“I knew in junior high school that I wanted to be a therapist,” says Carolyn. “It felt like a good fit from the beginning. But it wasn’t until I started counseling people in graduate school when I knew I’d picked the right profession.”

Carolyn was born in Oakland, a fifth generation Californian. After graduating from Smith College with a degree in psychology she received both a Masters of Science and Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology from the University of Oregon. Throughout her graduate and post graduate studies, she put in stints at three different college counseling centers, at the University of Oregon, UC

Santa Barbara and the University of San Francisco, all collegial and close knit communities which set the stage for her finding CCI. “Part of what appealed to me in the counseling centers was my flexible schedule, being my own boss and the feeling of being a part of a family,” she says.

Three years ago, while completing her post doctorate at the University of San Francisco’s counseling center, she got licensed and learned about CCI on the Internet. “I’d been looking into counseling centers in the Bay Area and sent my resume to CCI. Elaine came across it and called me in for an interview.” That was in April 2007 and she has been working four days a week steadily since then. She has just opened a private practice in Oakland where she plans to work one day a week. (Her website: www.carolynphd.com).

Carolyn began her career concentrating in eating disorders and other women’s issues during her graduate teaching fellowship at the University of Oregon. “I grew up in a feminist environment and have always been drawn to women’s issues, “she says. “I consider myself a feminist.”

While a small percentage of her current clients are seen for eating disorders, she also sees a number of young women in their 20s and 30s who are dealing with self-esteem issues and life transitions. “I try and help people understand the present through the lens of the past and that everything makes sense in context. If a person has a history of anxiety, for example, maybe her parent was hyper vigilant and she grew up always anxious that something bad was going to happen. My goal is to try and show them how that behavior is not working but is a hindrance instead of a help to them.”

A growing number of Carolyn’s clients these days are seeking couples therapy. While relationship dynamics have always been a core interest to her, Carolyn is now specializing in something called Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples (EFT-C), a short term psychotherapy approach to working with couples (and more recently with families) based on the principles of emotion theory and attachment theory, originally developed in the 1980s by Leslie Greenberg and Sue Johnson. She is currently in the process of being certified as an EFT-C therapist.

“A lot of couples have the same argument over and

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over again and are in a loop that they can't escape. My task is to try and identify what that cycle is, help them to define it and how to change it," she says. EFT-C therapists help couples go to the underlying emotions that keep them stuck in those rigid positions and negative interaction cycles. It emphasizes the re-creation of emotionally supportive bonds between partners to improve and enhance connection within a couple.

"I think people learn and change the most through their personal relationships," says Carolyn, who enjoys being in nature and traveling with her

husband in her spare time. "At CCI, because we're all interacting with each other all the time, we are constantly growing and helping each other out. I feel very fortunate and lucky to work here."



Know someone who might benefit from our services? Please have them call 415-752-1702, voicemail box "0". Our intake therapist usually calls back within 24 hours.

California Counseling Institute

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- Elaine Chan-Scherer, LCSW, Executive Director
- Meg Bloomfield, Managing Director
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- Tina Smelser, MFT
- Carolyn Swearingen, Ph.D Licensed Psychologist
- Julie Terraciano, MFT
- Brenda Wong, MFT
- Maureen Fisher, MFTI
- Darcy Lyon, MFTI
- Taryn Bernstein, MFTI

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4614 California Street
 San Francisco CA 94118
 phone: 415.752.1702, fax: 415.933.8593
 email: ccipsyche@earthlink.net

More information and articles by CCI
 Therapists are available online at:
www.californiacounseling.org

With Thanks And Appreciation

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To be applied to:

- Client Assistance Fund
(to support therapy for low fee clients)
- Other program at CCI
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Cut along dotted line and return this form and donation to:

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