

Self Care



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Local therapist discusses mental health, self-care

By **RICHARD COLTHARP**

Las Cruces Bulletin

A hundred years ago, if people had concerns about their mental health, they might not even know what it was. But if they did, they might be told by friends and family: “Don’t talk about it. Don’t air your dirty laundry. It doesn’t exist. You’re just imagining things.”

Fifty years ago, the responses may have been different, but no more helpful: “Tough it out. Suck it up! No pain, no gain. What doesn’t kill you only makes you stronger.”

These days, however, we’re more in tune with mental health. We know about things such as post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. We’re more likely to say, “Let’s talk about it.”

And, according to licensed marriage and family therapist and certified sex therapist Andrea Dresser, we definitely should be talking about it.

“Check in with a friend, or a therapist,” said Dresser, who owns Counseling Las Cruces. “People need acknowledgement and validation. If you can’t find it in your circle of friends, then it’s time to reach out to a professional.”

The attitudes surrounding mental health issues may have slowly evolved, and some of the past stigmas are eroding.

The pandemic, however, brought a whole new set of challenges for everyone: people with mental health issues, the caregivers of those people, and the therapists who treat them.

“Covid was a game changer for everybody,” Dresser said. “People were isolated, stuck at home, as individuals, as families.”

That led to some negative fallout, she said, such as substance abuse, domestic abuse and divorce. Some people became reclusive and therapists saw a big increase in social anxiety.

“But it also led to people realizing it’s OK to ask for help,” she said.

No one has ever had a problem going to a doctor if they break an arm or get a deep cut on their leg. Dresser said seeking a mental health professional should be just as common.

The same goes with medication.

“If you were diabetic you’d take your insulin, right?” Dresser said. “And if you’re depressed, you need an anti-depressant to make you feel better.”

Often, small, non-pharmaceutical adjustments can make a big difference.

For couples, Dresser said, sometimes simply getting out of the house and going for a walk outside can change moods and attitudes for the better.

For people with social anxiety, Dresser said a simple

“homework assignment” is, when you’re at the store, say hello to someone you don’t know. For many people, that may sound basic or even silly, but for those with deep angst, it can be a big challenge.

But the reward of having someone smile and say hello back can be immeasurable.

Those human interactions, especially when we do something to help each other, can make a big difference, Dresser said.

“Twelve-step programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous are real big on getting out of yourself by doing something for somebody else,” she said. “Doing something for someone else is really healing.”

FINDING A THERAPIST

If you do decide to reach out to a therapist, be aware of the current therapist backlog. A combination of increased demand for therapists, and many therapists retiring or taking a break from their careers has made it more difficult to find one.

It has been further complicated by the fact Medicaid is more restrictive on therapists than commercial insurance, which can make it even more difficult for people with low income.

When you do find a therapist, though, don’t feel as if you have to stick with the first one you see, Dresser advised.

“When you’re picking a therapist, you can start deciding from the initial meeting, ‘Is it a fit, or is it not a fit?’” Dresser said. If you don’t feel comfortable with a therapist, they are not going to be offended.

“They want you to have the right fit,” Dresser said. One positive result of Covid has been the increase in telemedicine, which gives people flexibility in choosing between a telehealth meeting or an in-person discussion.

SIGNS AND COUNTERMEASURES

How do you know if you should seek professional help?

If you’re upset because your favorite basketball team lost a big game, that’s probably not the kind of long-term depression requiring therapy. But if you throw a chair through the television and tear up your house because of the game, that may be a sign of anger issues that need to be addressed.

Dresser listed some behaviors that could benefit from therapy: Sleep disruption, irritability, agitation, not finding joy in familiar activities, apathy, avoiding social situations, feelings of hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, thinking of plans for suicide, addiction.

She also listed some things, in addition to seeking therapy, that could benefit if you’re having these symptoms: Moving your body, getting some fresh air, calling an old friend.

“Going to your church, synagogue or mosque, or finding ways to reconnect to your spiritual life” can be valuable for many people, Dresser said.

HELPING ALL PEOPLE

Children can also benefit through therapy, and Counseling Las Cruces has rooms with toys and other items for children to play with as a therapist observes and interacts. Dresser said some signs that children 3 and older may need professional attention include: Bedwetting, acting out, nightmares, incessant crying, violent tantrums.

And while some stigmas are going away, others are being redirected.

There may be less stigma today around the gay and lesbian community, but there is increasing societal and legal stigma around other segments, for example, the transgender population.

“Before, there wasn’t the terminology we have now,” Dresser said. “In our practice, we see a lot of transgender people. I feel for that population because, politically, it’s getting worse and worse for them. Some states are denying them medical care.”

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City of Las Cruces: 'Happy Trails to You'

By **CATHY MATHEWS, Landscape Architect**

City of Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Departments

The City of Las Cruces recently completed design and construction of several trails within the city limits in cooperation with Elephant Butte Irrigation District. These trails include the Mesilla Drain Trail between the Outfall Channel Trail and Burn Lake (2.5 miles), the Armijo Lateral Trail between the Outfall Channel Trail and Burn Lake (three miles) and the Las Cruces Lateral Trail between the Outfall Channel Trail and Spruce Avenue near the Las Cruces Police Station and Fire

Station #1 (1.5 miles).

These trails are in addition to other trails that are managed by the City Parks and Recreation Department; Triviz Drive Multi-Use Trail (4.5 miles) between the NMSU main campus and Kohl's, the Outfall Channel Trail (4.3 miles) between Kohl's and the river and the La Llorona/Rio Grande Trail (4.6 miles) connecting the Outfall Channel Trail with the Town of Mesilla.

Other trails within the city trail system include Alameda Arroyo Trail (0.7 miles) near Camino Real

Middle School, Legends West Trails (1.2 miles) throughout the Legends West neighborhoods and the Twin Parks Trail (0.9 miles) on Engler Avenue between Mesa Drive and Jornada Drive.

The new trails in the city's system expand the recreational trail system within the city limits from over 19 miles in length to over 26 miles in length.

Upcoming city recreational trail projects include more Las Cruces lateral trails between NMSU main campus and Las Cruces High School and also connecting NMSU main campus to the Village of Tortugas.



Construction is on-going to finish trails in and around Las Cruces to provide access for healthy walking and activities.

BULLETIN FILE PHOTO

Additional trails programming in the planning stages includes mountain bike trails in the vicinity of the East Mesa Public Recreation Complex. Also, the city is completing a park and trail wayfinding plan that will guide the placement and visual appeal of a comprehensive wayfinding

sign system that will help guide park and trail users to destinations and routes that are accessible by pedestrians and bicyclists.

The Parks and Recreation Department trail system development is guided by the master plan which outlines our community's goal to provide a

system of multi-use trails that support residents' and visitors' fitness, recreation and transportation needs while linking community destinations such as parks, open space, schools and other community activity centers. This goal is consistent with the city's Active Transportation Plan.

Taking care of your heart is the greatest form of Self-Care...

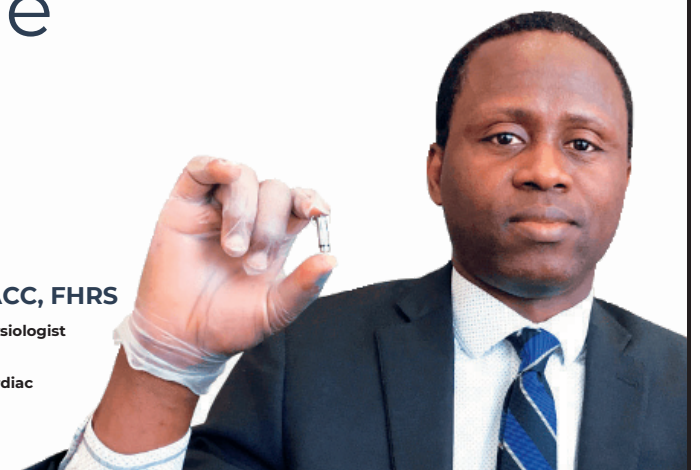


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Nutrition: The road to empowering, feel-good health

By ELVA K. ÖSTERREICH

Nutritional health is of primary importance to taking care of yourself according to Nutritional Health Coach Clifford Kinnear Jr. who works at Natural Grocers. His job includes services from nutrition workshops and cooking classes to providing one-on-one grocery experiences, all at no cost.

When children help with the cooking it supports the overall morale of the family, he said. They love the cutting and chopping too.

But it's not only the food that goes into the body that is important, but it is also the nutrients in that food and the nutrient density in it. Kinnear describes the benefits of organic and non-GMO foods to the body and mind.

more things like like Omega-3 fatty acids which support anti-inflammatory response throughout the body.

"Grass fed cattle have more vitamins," he said. "It has vitamins A (eye health), D (healthy hormone balance, cholesterol balance), E (skin health, eye health) and K (supports healthy calcium balance within the blood)."

Kinnear said when it comes to immune

always number one," he said. "And when we do that, complex carbohydrates are going to bring in energy so you can tackle whatever it is you have got going on in your life. Finding ways to support mood, cognition and memory is going to be vital and one of the best ways you can do that is through your diet."

Cooking breakfast in the morning before work has become an important act



PHOTOS BY ELVA ÖSTERREICH

Clifford Kinnear Jr. works with a class on understanding food labeling at Natural Grocers in Las Cruces.

Kinnear started school wanting to be a chef, decided he was interested in nursing, then combined the two to earn his master's in nutrition.

"The more I learned about nutrition and how it supported overall wellbeing, I just got more curious and just stayed in school" he said. "In 2019 I was program coordinator for NMSU (New Mexico State University) and working with different programs."

As he learned more about nutrition and about how to support people with their lifestyles as a coach, Kinnear said he learned how nutrition can make an impact on self-care.

"Whenever people learn more about nutrition and their wellbeing, they start practicing it more and more at home," he said. "They start feeling better, more energy and they start having fun because cooking with family is pretty fun."

He uses the example of corn fields. In an acre of corn grown non-organically, herbicides and pesticides are killing the bugs and different organisms in the soil.

"Whenever we do that, we have a lot of corn but there is no biodiversity," Kinnear said. "Whenever the bugs and different organisms in the soil are dying you are reducing the biodiversity of the soil. Plants will have more nutrients to them when the plants are going through stress and if the plants aren't being stressed by the environment, then the nutrient density isn't going to be the same."

He said there have been many studies supporting better nutrient density in organic products. For example, in a study on bell peppers, they found an organic bell pepper has more vitamin C than conventional produce and it tastes different.

Animals, too, will have more nutrients for example, the grass-fed cattle have

health the most important part of your body is your stomach.

"Your gut is like your second brain," he said. "When it comes to feeling good and taking care of yourself, nutrition can play a huge role."

In another example, Kinnear said when he eats something that doesn't agree with him or isn't very nutritious, he notices a difference in his whole day.

"I'm not as alert, kind of groggy, tired, maybe my mood is off, I feel bored or sleepy," he said. "But when I am taking care of my meal, I find that my energy is supported."

As a general guideline, a good balance for a meal includes a plate half full of veggies, with another quarter of the plate having healthy fats and the other quarter healthy protein choices.

"It doesn't matter what kind of professional you are, eating more veggies is

for Kinnear.

"It provides a lot of emotional support for me," he said. "I just take care of myself in the morning and that's my time."

And cooking itself is a fast business. It generally takes less time to fry up an egg and toss some vegetables in a pan than it does to stop at a fast-food place in the morning. Kinnear said if you pick out a day or two a week to spend some time on prep work, like chopping things up, all you need to do whenever it comes time to cook that meal is just heat up the ingredients or just throw it on the pan.

"Cooking is really relaxing, and it's fun," he said. "And it smells amazing when you sauté garlic and onions. It's nice to give time to yourself. While prepping and cooking, you are showing appreciation to yourself, giving time to yourself."

"The best thing we can do when it comes to self-care is to give ourselves time."