



Dear Friends of CCI,

Every Wednesday at noon, we have a staff meeting. We sit in a rough circle in Room 1, and before we discuss anything, we have a five-minute meditation. It can be a meditation led by visualization, a poem, a piece of prose, or simply a breathing exercise. Whatever is spoken, we relax, focus our thoughts, still our minds, and calm our spirit. We simply be.



When that is done, when we are all fully present in the room, we have a brief check in. We share our roses and thorns; we share pieces of the fabric of our lives, the rips and the mended parts. Then we discuss business, the business of money, the daily tasks of running the business, and the business based on hurt and pain. At its core, this is the business of healing. We have had many disagreements, many discussions, many hurtful things said and healed. We trust each other to work through the hard part of working together, rest and relax in the easy part of working together. Through all of this, we try to move towards consensus, and to let the healing happen. There is much wisdom in that room, and truth. We try to keep ourselves open to the process and learn from it. That takes trust and love.

Most of all we nurture each other's spirit. It is in our mission to "aid in the healing transformation of our clients, through the integration of psychotherapy and spirituality." So what does *that* mean? Do we spend all that time in the therapy rooms *praying*? Most times, anything but.

I have a confession to make. I have never had therapy. I work with 8 therapists, and I really don't know what exactly happens in the room. They have talked about creating a sacred space, where spiritually healing moments happen. That space where there is room for the infinite moment, when the therapist and client share understanding and the healing starts. I imagine that what we do during our staff meetings happens then. I know each therapist listens to the speaker, hears the truth in what each person says, and helps them navigate the path to understanding and enlightenment. I believe them,

because I see it happen every Wednesday in our staff meetings.

Elaine and I and all of us at CCI thank you for your support and interest in our work. Many of you have contributed to our Client Assistance Fund. All of you understand the work we do and support it with donations and prayers, and by responding to the annual campaign requests by our staff and board members. Your support makes our job easier because we can better engage our focus on the work of healing. Please enjoy the newsletter.

With hope and peace,

Meg Bloomfield, Managing Director

PS: As always, we encourage you to visit our website at www.californiacounseling.org



Finding Spirituality in Therapy

Since its inception, the California Counseling Institute has sought to provide therapy that consciously listens and responds to both the spirit and the psyche of the individual, the relationship or the family. Its therapeutic approach is not just focused on the medical model of mental disorders and the elimination of symptoms. It is therapy that addresses the whole person and is equally concerned with the person who can potentially be realized through the therapeutic process.

How are the spirit and psyche inextricably bound together? And how is that integration experienced as transformation in therapy?

"My conviction of the inseparability of psyche and the spirit comes out of my own life story," says The Reverend John Gallagher, former Director of CCI and the current Board Chairman, who has been an Episcopal priest for 45 years and a therapist for 26 years.

Gallagher, who was not brought up in any religious tradition, realized in his mid-twenties that he was searching for "something," though he had no idea what that something was. His quest was usually in the role of being the skeptic, questioning his Christian and Jewish friends about their faith. Eventually, tired of his pestering, one friend invited him to attend St. Luke's Episcopal Church in San Francisco.

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

For the past nine months, Hannah, a woman in her late 20's, has been coming weekly to CCI to see a therapist. She suffers from depression and anxiety. She lost her job a year ago, which sent her already precarious self-esteem even lower. She worries that she might have to move back in with her parents, with whom she still has trouble maintaining healthy boundaries. Her therapist has been helping her to look at her patterns of behavior that lead to her depression and anxiety, and to help her set up boundaries with her family. She recently found part time work and has become more stable in her moods and is less anxious. She is beginning to rely more on herself and gain confidence in her abilities.

Hannah is a Client Assistance Fund (CAF) recipient, which allows her to benefit from low fee therapy from one of CCI's therapists. She says that CCI has been one of her main lifelines for the past nine months as she has been sorting out her life. She tells her therapist that she has been the one person able to offer her support and encouragement in a safe and trusting place to explore her many challenges.

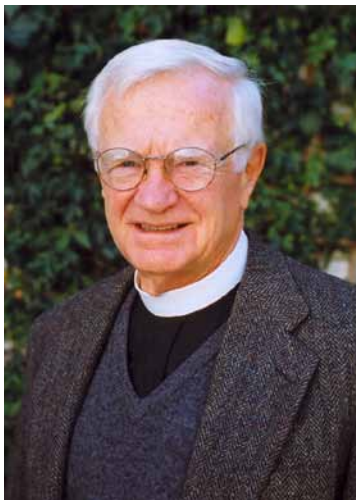
CCI served 82 CAF clients in 2009 (those who pay less than \$65 an hour for therapy) and donated a total of \$225,356 in pro bono fees, which represents 24 percent of client hours overall. We are dedicated to providing therapy to as broad a group as possible, regardless of their income levels.

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 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.

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"The experience of the liturgy, the music and a sense of community transcended my skepticism about the church's teachings, and I felt as though I had come home," says Gallagher. What followed was a ten-year "often bumpy" journey of lay ministry, seminary, ordination and service as an Episcopal priest. "The years of studying theology, serving a parish, being involved in civil rights and social justice ministries and working for a Bishop were extremely full and gratifying," says Gallagher. "What I did not realize was that my spiritual life had hit a brick wall. I had been spending all my energies focused on the outer and on others and had failed to listen to the yearnings of my own soul."



Through the Guild for Psychological Studies and his own therapy with a Jungian analyst, he began to explore not only the truths that lay behind the Gospels

and Biblical stories that are the foundation of his spirituality, but also, the depths of his unconscious. What had been stories and events of the past became metaphors for understanding his own story, giving him new perspectives on the realities of his life, past and present. "What in the past I had tried to forgive and forget - 'wipe the slate clean,' now was remembered, accepted and transformed, transforming me in the process."

Gallagher is convinced that our spiritual well-being and psychological health are interrelated and interacting. He defines therapy "as an opportunity not only to explore the depths of the unconscious and to listen to the soul's strivings, but also to act on the insights gained and experience transformation."

For CCI therapist Julie Terraciano, teaching for 22 years at Cathedral School for Boys and practicing as a therapist have made for an enriching and satisfying co-existence. "I think all of us at CCI have been drawn here for reasons beyond therapy," she says. "The articulation of spirituality is hard. I would say it's more of an intuition, an inner sense, in the same way that at Cathedral it was more than just grades. Here, it is more than just a diagnosis. There is a sacred aspect to what we do."

Terraciano says the presence of spirituality at CCI doesn't have to do with "Jesus or the Bible. It has to

do with a sense that this is the place to be with this client. When someone says something in a session and wants to move right on, I will say, 'Let's just sit with that for now and reflect on it. Let's not move right onto the next thing so fast.' It's pretty clear that this is the place to be right now with this client."

As someone who has written eloquently about the interlacing of therapy and spirituality, Terraciano often contributes poems to staff meetings and retreats, one of which follows:

Sacred Moments, Sacred Spaces

*They are everywhere
These moments that we
Sometimes take for granted
...and then we don't.
Suddenly, just like that,
The moment is real
And holds us,
Touches us, lets us in,
Lets us grow,
Fills us with sorrow,
Joy, laughter,
Pain, shadow,
Possibility, despair.*

*We can't escape them,
These sacred moments,
When we breathe, really breathe,
Drop down, into our lives,
Into our hearts,
Into the hearts of those
With whom we face the dark and the light,
Those whom we love.*

*We are there with them
As we rejoin ourselves,
In the most sacred of spaces,
The open heart.*



The Sound of Therapy

Music conductors and therapists have some things in common. Both listen attentively, shape the sounds in the room, and are keenly attuned to the elements of tempo, dynamics, and silences between the notes. CCI therapist Tina Smelser says she sometimes visualizes herself as a conductor during

her couples therapy sessions, cueing each person to make sure his or her sound is heard, signaling one to come forward and holding another back. Sometimes she stops the playing altogether when each person is so focused on their own sound that they can't hear the other.

It's an apt analogy for Smelser, an accomplished flutist, who often observes the musical elements in relationships in her work. She encourages her clients to observe the tone, rhythm and harmony of their relationships and to "listen attentively to their own sound and the sound of their partner, and to experiment with some new improvisations together."

A San Francisco native, Smelser grew up "indirectly hearing the language of psychotherapy" from her mother who was also a psychotherapist. After majoring in psychology in college, she returned to school for her teaching credential but then took a side turn back to playing her flute and became interested in linking the two fields together into music therapy. She earned her masters degree at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) with a concentration in Expressive Arts Therapy, the practice of using imagery, storytelling, dance, music, drama, poetry, movement, dream work and visual arts as a complement to verbal therapy.

Smelser works primarily as a psychotherapist and uses expressive arts therapy only when she senses that a client is receptive to and may benefit from it. "Sometimes it starts with working with images from their dreams or metaphors from their language," says Smelser. "Or I may have the client use scarves to represent issues, people, or parts of themselves. I have a bag of scarves, all different colors. A client might pick from the bag to make a family genogram (a display of a person's family relationships). Each member of the family would be a different color, form or shape and then they may form a shape of all the scarves, which can symbolize the distance between them. I have to trust the process, to be open to what it's going to stir up in them and to know that there's healing in the process."

"The ironic part is that I use music the least in my practice although that's what got me initially interested in expressive arts therapy," says Smelser. "A couple of clients are musicians where I can refer to songs or playing. Expressing things playfully through art, drama or music may access a deeper part of themselves which can be more powerful and also more revealing."

Smelser also likes working with cultural

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identity issues with clients. "My growing up in San Francisco and my own background helped me to become sensitive to these issues," says Smelser, who has been a therapist at CCI for 5 years. "It can be helpful to identify the conflicting value systems and expectations of the two or more cultures that the client is holding, which they may not even have been consciously aware of. It can be healing to name these conflicts, and make space for the feelings that go along with them."

Smelser has been exploring her own creativity outside music for many years. She has always enjoyed writing verse, especially on special occasions such as birthdays. Here is an excerpt from one of her recent works, called "The Pause:"

*You know, it actually is quite healing
to stop and feel what you are feeling
To live within a deeper layer
try using pausing time for prayer
A short break from an urgent goal
might reconnect you to your soul
Can you still sense the inspiration
you tasted on your last vacation?
I hereby grant you full permission
To schedule in an intermission*



California Counseling Institute

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- Elaine Chan-Scherer, LCSW, Executive Director
- Meg Bloomfield, Managing Director
- Jana Silverman, MFT
- Tina Smelser, MFT
- Carolyn Swearingen, Licensed Psychologist
- Julie Terraciano, MFT
- Brenda Wong, MFT
- Maureen Fisher, MFTI
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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
- Where it is most needed

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