Mind Matters



BALL STATE UNIVERSITY COUNSELING PRACTICUM CLINIC

Furry, Feathery, Finny Fun: Benefits of Pets

Volume 1, Issue 3 June 2009

By Tracy Ksiazak, MA

pet lovers will share at every chance, researchers have shown that living a pet-filled life can help your mental and physical health. People who own pets generally:

- Have fewer health problems that require visits to the doc-
- Have lower blood pressure
- Live longer
- Have higher self-esteem
- Are less anxious than people without pets
- Are happier than people without pets
- Have more friends
- Have more empathy for others

Researchers have also found that having a pet can help kids to be healthier and better adjusted. In one study, 12to 14-year-old children described their pets as more important than

about themselves. In another study, 285 adolescents reported that their dogs and cats helped them to build new friendships, reduce stress, have fun, and learn responsibility. Adolescent pet owners also had much higher selfesteem than adolescents who did not have pets. Pets also teach kids about life events such as reproduction and death. Most importantly, pets have been found to teach children to be able to care for others. This increases their likelihood of being kind to others, being able to understand others' experiences, and forming good relationships.

In considering whether to get a pet for Fish are great pets to watch, but your family, it's important to think In addition to the great stories that about how well the pet will fit into your lifestyle. This means understanding the needs of the pets and engaging in responsible pet ownership (e.g., having your pet spayed or neutered). Your local library or pet store likely has a lot of information about pet ownership as would your local veterinarian.

> Dogs love to be with their owners and to be active. Caring for them takes a lot of time daily: feeding, potty breaks, walks, playtime, etc. They are a great fit for someone who is looking

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for a jogaing buddy, frequent companion, or Frisbee partner. They're also with you for the long haul. Dogs usually live 10-14 years, but some small breeds can live nearly 20 years! On the flip side, a dog would be a bad fit for a busy person who is never home or a person who prefers a couch potato lifestyle. According to Petfinder.com, the

teachers in making them feel good average yearly cost of dogs ranges from \$780-\$1500.

> Cats are much more independent. They enjoy a lot of "alone time" in addition to their regular time playing with you or being petted. Cats are a great fit for someone who travels occasionally, works long hours, or prefers to spend a your pet's day with lot of time inside. They'll be with you for a long time, too; a typical cat lives 15-17 years! On the flip side, cats are less trainable than dogs and generally don't like to go for walks with you! According to Petfinder.com, the average yearly cost of cats is approximately \$640.

they aren't very interactive. They also have been found to help people relax – that's why lots of dentists' offices have fish tanks in their waiting rooms! Fish are a good fit for busy people who prefer to look at pets rather than take them for walks or play with them. On the flip side, they don't provide owners with as much emotional support as a dog or cat would. The average yearly cost for fish varies, depending on the size of tank and type of fish you select.

Birds can sometimes be trained to talk with you or do tricks like a dog; they're actually very smart! As small pets, they are rather inexpensive to care for, but they require fresh food and water daily, as well as regular cage cleanings. They can also be very loud, and some birds (like giant parrots) can live up to 100 years! A bird would be a great pet for a person with limited mobility, a person with a hearing impairment, or a person who does not want a high maintenance pet. Average yearly costs of owning small birds are approximately \$300 or less.

Summer is a great time to enjoy the social and health benefits of pets! You can boost your mood by taking 5 minutes to pet your dog

or cat or 30 minutes to walk your pooch. You can also make fresh food and water, some attention, or a game of fetch. Happy petparenting!

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Monthly Guidance

Dear MG,

After my ex-wife and I got a divorce, the summer became the only extended amount of time that I get to spend with my three kids. I really want to use the summer to bond with them. My three children are enterina adolescence and I fear that it's becoming "uncool to hang out with Dad." How can I be the cool Dad and still feel connected with them? Sincerely, Almost Cool

FIND

ACTIVITIES

THAT BOTH

NATURAL

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FOSTER THEIR

DEVELOPMENT

Dear Almost Cool,

Having limited visitation time is stressful! Many parents in this scenario struggle to make the most out of the time that they get with their kids; however, you seem to have the added challenge of bonding with adolescents. This may be difficult because it could seem like all your children want to do is pull away from you and become more independent rather than bond with you. Children at this age are interested in building relationships, but unfortunately, that doesn't

always mean that they want to do that with their Mom and Dad. This is not because your children dislike you or because you aren't cool enough. Your children are just going through the natural processes of becoming independent, self-reliant adults. Part of natural development means that

they are looking for new friends and new social situations to experience and learn from. Becoming aware that your children are going through this behavior should indicate to you that they are developing healthfully. But it doesn't mean that you will not have any rich opportunities to bond and connect with them!

Find activities that both foster their natural development and build closeness. One of the easiest places to spend quality time is around the dinner table. Though unsuspecting, dinner time provides a great opportunity to share stories,

> discuss concerns and learn new things about each other. Give your children opportunities to be more independent like choosing what or where to eat for dinner. You might even ask your children to cook their own meals or cook for the entire family. Think creatively and come up with fun questions such as, "What is your favorite movie?" and "What is the funniest thing that happened to you this year?" rather than the usual "How is school?" to ask during dinner.

Another great activity to try with adolescents is one-on-one time. Give

each one of your children a day that they can share with you by themselves. This time will allow your child to feel unique and special. Take advantage of the process when deciding and planning how to spend the day together, it can truly be an exciting bonding process for the two of you! You will have ample time to learn more

about one another simply by being together. The special treatment is bound to be a memorable experience that you can share with each of your children.

Have realistic expectations that your children may need their space. By planning in advance, you and your children are bound to grow closer; however, sometimes things don't go as planned. In times like these, the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic can help provide the tools to mend ruptures in your relationships. Experienced counselors are always here to help you find the things that will truly make you feel closer to your children, not to mention, the coolest Dad on the block! — \mathcal{MG}

Monthly Guidance [MG] is here to answer questions about relationships and personal issues. If you would like to ask MG a question, you may call the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic and leave an anonymous message for MG. Or, you may send your question in writing to the address on the back page of this newsletter. If you choose to ask MG a question, the identity of the person submitting the question will remain completely anonymous. Please keep in mind when writing your questions that space is limited. Due to time constraints, MG cannot answer all questions, but will try to choose auestions that are representative of a broad range of issues. If your question does not get answered and you would like to discuss it, please call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047. Please be advised that MG is neither a crisis/ emergency service nor a correspondence therapy service. If you need either immediate attention or ongoing therapy, call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047.

Choosing Not to Pursue the Perfect Beach Body

By Tricia Groff, MS

Summer is an especially difficult time for people who compare their bodies with those of others. Gym advertisements usually include quick-start diet plans accompanied by pictures of people with rippled abdominal muscles and flawless skin. Furthermore, the concern about showing arms and legs in everyday summer clothing increases people's worries about trying to lose weight or increase their muscle tone. Thus, focus on how one looks in a swimsuit or shorts can overshadow the enjoyment of the extra sunshine, the feel of sand squishing between one's toes, or the extra time for outdoor picnics with friends.

How often have you heard the statement, "I just want to use the summer for extra motivation to kick-start weight loss"? The problem with this approach is that most people are not able to fully enjoy summer because of their concentration on losing weight;

of failure when the weight returns in the fall and wintertime. Additionally, the underlying message to oneself is "I cannot or do not deserve to have fun unless my body measures up to America's ideal." Because many people's bodies are slightly saggy or lumpy due to age, genetics, previous weight struggles, or all of these, they



unlikely to attain this ideal.

What if the focus this summer were on furthermore, they endure increased feelings being healthy and having fun with family regardless of size? Many people cite health as the reason they want to lose weight, but the obsession with cellulite and dress size indicates that this is not the case. Your health is such an important part of your ability to have energy and feel great. Contrary to popular belief, many people can be very healthy, regardless of weight-loss. What about viewing walks and bike rides as opportunities to strengthen your muscles, increase your blood flow, and enjoy the fresh air, rather than using them simply to lose weight? In regards to nutrition, summer is such a fabulous time to enjoy fresh fruit. Wouldn't it be great to enjoy the juiciness of a strawberry rather than counting the calories in it? Sometimes people have had so much experience with dieting that they begin to view fruits and vegetables as diet foods rather than pleasures to be savored. This summer would be a great time to change that. Here's how!

- Stop critiquing your body in front of the mirror.
- Stop getting on the scales. If that suggestion makes you anxious or angry, think about what the ritual of weighing yourself means to you.
- Protect yourself as much as possible from the media and social messages that glorify weight-

Continued on Page 3 (Beach Body)

Beach Body (cont'd. from page 2)

- Make a list of the qualities about yourself that you like as well as the aspects of your life for which you are grateful. Remind yourself that seeing your body size as "the one area I can't seem to succeed in" will keep you from focusing on all of the other areas of beauty in yourself and in your life.
- If you compare yourself with those around you, compare all aspects. Most women want another person's waist, height, or legs, etc. They rarely think about trading the rest of the physical and personality characteristics as well.

This can lead to feeling that one is always inferior rather than to the balanced reality that everyone has both positive and negative attributes.

These suggestions may be foreign to those who have a lifelong history of hating their bodies. It definitely takes time to change that thought process. At the same time, the prevalence of struggles with endless cycles of dieting, binge eating or eating disorders illustrates how summer's joys are lost in the chaos of figuring out what to eat, what to wear, and obsessing over the number on the scale.

This summer, try to avoid the incessant conversa-

tions in which people are discussing their weight, their cellulite, their diets, etc. Focus on what your body is asking for instead—is it a nap in the sunshine, extra activity to get your blood flowing, or more nutritious food to increase energy and decrease lethargy? Your body is the vehicle that will take you through the next several months; see if you don't have more fun by loving and caring for it rather than by trying to perfect it.

If you have a long history of hating your body and you find that you are not able to break the obsession with weight and food, please contact the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic for assistance in dealing with this struggle.

Searching for the Ideal Career: Know Your Skills

YOUR SKILLS

ABILITIES AND

TALENTS THAT

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OVER YOUR

LIFETIME

ARE THE

By: Michael O'Heron, MA

For many people, making a meaningful career choice is an important life decision. At the same time, finding the ideal career can be very challenging. While people frequently rely on help-wanted advertisements and employment agencies as a means of identifying the ideal career, people often have little success finding a career by using these methods (Bolles, 2009).

Fortunately, there is a more effective way

to find your ideal career: knowing your skills! Your skills are the abilities and talents that you have developed over your lifetime. You may have developed these skills from hobbies, sports activities, or other extracurricular activities that you may have been involved in during your grade school years. You may have also developed these skills in your past or current jobs or careers. When identifying your skills, it is important to think about the people who have inspired you to learn new things, as well as all of the experiences that have helped you to become more knowledgeable in perform-

ing a certain job or task. It is also important to know your skills because being successful in a certain career requires certain types of skills.

A fun way to identify your skills is by participating in the following career party exercise. Imagine that you have been invited to a party. When you arrive at the party, you see six different groups of people having conversations with each other about a variety of topics. When you walk around the room, you listen to the people in each of the six groups.

In the first group, the people are talking about everything from sports, to raising animals, to fixing cars. Everyone in the group enjoys being outdoors and working with their hands, and fixing or tinkering with things. We can call these folks the **Realistic** group.

 In the second group, everyone is talking about watching, investigating, analyzing, or solving problems. Some of the people say that they like science. Others say that they enjoy puzzles and computer games. These people seem really good at finding answers to problems. We can call these folks the

Investigative group.

- The third group of people is talking about creative tasks. They are talking about drawing and painting and doing creative things. Most of them talk about using their imaginations or creativity in unstructured tasks. We can call these folks the **Artistic** group.
- You notice that in the fourth group, the people are very loud, but then you realize they just like talking. These people say that they are interested in teaching, performing in front of an audience, or helping people solve their problems. These folks can be called the **Social** group.
- People in the fifth group seem very persuasive. They seem like the types of people who would make good leaders. They talk about owning their own business or seeking a career in politics. These folks can be called the Enterprising group.
- People in the sixth group are a bit quieter than others. These people talk about being organized. They seem to like to talk about working with numbers and data. These folks can be called the Conventional group.

Now, which group do you want to hang out with



first? Again, your choices are Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional [RIASEC]. After you hang out with the first group for 10 minutes or so, you choose a second group to hang out with. After, spending time with the second group for 10 minutes, you choose a third group to visit with. Now look at the three top groups that you chose. These top groups define your career code. For example, if you chose to spend time with the Social, Investigative, and Artistic folks, your code is SIA. Once you have your code, visit the Website www.learnmoreindiana.org and click on the career profiles link. This Website will match your code with a number of careers that persons with the same code typically enjoy. In addition, there are several other Websites and resources that provide good career information such as: O*NET-Occupational Information Network- (http://online.Onetcenter.org), a site that provides information on 1000 job titles and is one of the most comprehensive career Websites in the United States or the book "What Color is your Parachute?" by Richard Bolles, which provides a wealth of information about learning the tools for finding the ideal career.

Finally, it may be helpful to make an appointment at the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic for our career counseling services.

Featured Counselor Profile

Heather Wood

By Jenelle N. Boo, MA With Heather Wood, MA

This column is a way for the community to learn about the diverse talents, both master's and doctoral students, employed at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic.

Heather Wood is studying to receive her PhD in Counseling Psychology from the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services. She is currently in her third-year in the doctoral program and has been at Ball State University for four years. She is currently seeing clients at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic while also supervising Caring Arts, supervising counselors at Motivate Our Minds, and taking courses. The following is a discussion with Heather, one of many talented individuals employed at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic.

How did you decide to pursue your PhD in Counseling Psychology?

I was a psychology and English major in college and knew that I wanted to pursue a graduate degree in the psychology field but was not sure which area really fit best. I was originally interested in clinical psychology, but after doing more research, I realized that my interests and values were a much better fit with counseling psychology; I particularly value counseling psychology's emphasis on building upon people's strengths. I worked for a year as a counselor for children in a partial hospitalization program. I really wanted to continue in my schooling so that I could better help them, and others like them, who have so much inner strength and resilience but who need help overcoming problems.

What are your clinical interests?

I am interested in a range of issues related to counseling children and families. I am interested in the use of cognitivebehavior and interpersonal therapy within a systemic context. I am particularly interested in helping children learn self-awareness and self-regulation. I have also been learning a lot more about different approaches to play ther-

apy and how to use play to help children explore issues. I am studying with a focus in assessment and value the use of testing to inform therapeutic practice. Finally, I am very interested in group work and supervision.

Can you tell us more about the Caring Arts

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AND THE SYSTEM,
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program and why you enjoy being involved?

The Caring Arts program is a psychoeducational program for children ages 4 to 13 years old who have emotional or developmental problems. Caring Arts is a prescriptive play program that incorporates expressive arts like dance, yoga, art, and music, with group therapy and a behavior program. The program is designed

to help children gain social skills and learn how to identify and cope with emotions. I was a counselor for Caring Arts during my master's program, and have been supervising at the program for about two years. It has been one of the best experiences of my doctoral program. The Caring Arts program is one where everyone really believes in the children and works together to help them succeed. The Hillcroft instructors are gifted artists who encourage the children to discover their talents. The program offers flexibility and creativity within a supportive behavioral structure. I have really enjoyed working with all of the staff and families involved in the program and consider myself lucky to be a part of such a great program. I also am very proud of all of the progress the children have shown and all of the great talents they have shared at Caring Arts.

What has been your most influential work experience?

My time working as a counselor at CARES in New Jersey was the experience that most shaped who I am as a counselor. After graduation from college, I was applying to various jobs, but was interested in working in the mental health field with an adult population. I did not have much of an interest in working with children, but was offered a job at CARES, and accepted. CARES is a partial hospitalization program for children ages 4-12 years, where children participate in schooling, individual, family, and group therapy. The program is mainly behaviorally oriented in terms of counseling, but also incorporates cognitive restructuring, play therapy, and medical treatment. During my time at CARES, I was predominantly a counselor in the 4- to 6- year old classroom. I loved it. I was so lucky to have amazing colleagues who really wanted to help children, who really believed in what they did, and who supported each other. I worked with children who inspired me. The children I worked with had multiple stressors, such as experiencing poverty, abuse, and dangerous neighborhoods. Yet these children survived and fought to succeed in the face of problems. They were able to show love and affection to others and to work to make themselves better. I returned to graduate school to learn more so that I could be a better counselor and help children realize their full potentials.

What do you hope to do after you graduate?

I hope to practice in the community. I would ideally like to go into private practice or work in a community counseling center. I am interested in continuing individual, family, and group counseling and assessment. I think that we can best help others by helping both

the individual and the system, so I hope to do consultation and help create prevention and intervention programs.



Heather Wood, third-year doctoral student in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services

Featured Mental Health Issue:

Social Anxiety Disorder

By Chris Modica, MA

Have you ever felt nervous around other people? Have you ever stayed home instead of going out and spending time with friends because you're afraid of being embarrassed or made fun of? When you are with other people, particularly strangers, do you ever feel sick to your stomach, sweat uncontrollably, or feel like you're going to faint? If you answered "Yes" to most of the following statements you may be struggling with a known psychological problem.

Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) is a psychological condition which effects anywhere from 3% -13% of individuals. It is one of the most common disorders in adolescence and one of the top three most common disorders in adulthood. Social anxiety disorder primarily involves three features:

You're scared of social situations or being with other people. In other words, individuals with SAD often have a strong belief that if they are with other people, they will be humiliated or that they will be made fun of or laughed at.

When you're with other people, you may notice that your body changes. Changes in your body include sweating, blushing, shaking, having a racing heartbeat, tense muscles, or feeling confused. You may even have panic

attacks, which are short periods of time (e.g., 10 minutes) of intense fear. These attacks include the symptoms mentioned above, but may be more severe and also include

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changes in vision, feelings of choking, or a fear of dying. You may also worry that others will notice your physical signs of anxiety and judge you harshly for it. You may avoid contact with other people altogether. You may have decided to "give up" trying to resolve your problem and end up spending most of your time alone. You may also worry about having to be with people in the future and worry and panic long before it even takes place. Because of this you may notice that you skip work, can't go to the grocery store, or skip school. Often times individuals may

have anxiety about being with other people, but their problem is not big enough to be considered SAD. For example, shyness is not necessarily SAD. Shyness, especially in children, is a common problem which typically goes away or is not big enough to cause the problems mentioned above. It is also common

for children to be scared or anxious around unfamiliar people or adults. These problems should not be confused with SAD. Social Anxiety Disorder in children may involve crying spells, "freezing up," throw-

ing temper tantrums, or panicking when around unfamiliar people. Individuals who are shy can still spend time with other people, although they may be uncomfortable.

Social Anxiety Disorder should also not be confused with *normal* anxiety. Anxiety is a normal feeling in many situations that everyone finds themselves in. Being "introverted," preferring a calm or slow lifestyle, or liking to be alone can be *normal* and, alone, are not to be considered SAD. It is normal to feel a little nervous or worried when you meet new people, have to perform in front of people, give a speech in front of people, or make small talk with a stranger.

The Ball State University Practicum Clinic is well-equipped to treat SAD. If

you believe you may suffer from SAD, counselors at the Ball State University Practicum Clinic can work with you to create a personalized treatment plan that can help you change the way you feel when you interact with other people.

Featured Wellness Issue:

Mindfulness Eating

By Jill Sullivan, MA

Did you ever wonder why you eat when you may not even be hungry? Oddly enough, there are many other things that may trigger you to eat besides physical hunger. When is the last time that you ate because you body was telling you that you were hungry? When was the last time you ate because you saw a late night television commercial for a fast food restaurant or because you were bored? The answer for many people would be that we tend to eat even though we are not hungry. Five possible reasons for this could be advertisement, sight or smell of food, boredom, social cues, or emotional eating. Finding ways to identify your physical hunger could help you eat more when you're hungry and less when you're not.

Advertising agencies make their living off making foods and beverages look appetizing. From picture perfect food on menus to late night commercials, the food pictures that surround us daily make it hard not to crave a cheeseburger and fries. Next time you see an advertisement, stop and think: Am I really physically craving that food or is this company

trying to make me think I am?

Sight and smell of food can also be an eating trigger. How many times have you walked by a co-worker's desk and shared in their afternoon snack or grabbed the couple extra handfuls of chips because they were sitting on the table next to you? Making food less available to yourself (i.e., putting the chips away in the cabinet, taking the chocolate off of your desk and putting it into your drawer) could help you better identify when you are physically hungry and when you may be eating just because you can see or smell the food.

Many people eat because they are bored and have nothing else to do. What else is there to do while watching TV, working, or paying the bills? Next time you find yourself going to grab a snack, try delaying grabbing a bite to eat and finding something else to take your mind off of food.

Another eating trigger that many people may experience are social cues. Social cues are things in society that may trigger people to eat even if they are not hungry. Things like going out to eat with friends may trigger people to think that they need to eat even if they are not hungry. Other triggers could include things like the time. Many of people eat lunch around noon and dinner at 6pm

or 7pm but are they eating because they are hungry or because the clock says that it is time to eat?

Last, emotions can cause people to eat even when they are not hungry. Many people eat when they are either extremely happy or sad. People tend to eat when they are happy to celebrate or reward themselves and people tend to eat when they are sad to comfort themselves. Next time you are having a great or not so great day, notice what you might be eating to help deal with some of these emotions.

In summary, sometimes many of us (if not all of us) eat, not when we are hungry, but because of other food triggers. Attempt to notice if you are being triggered by the above food triggers or if you are physically hungry. You might be surprised how often you eat, just to eat!



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Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic

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We're on the Web! http://www.bsu.edu/ counselingpsychology/clinic/

Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic: Serving the Community Since 1969

Mission

- The clinic is a training and research facility for the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services.
- The clinic provides high quality, low-cost psychological services to the Delaware County community and beyond.

Service Providers

- Over 50 graduate student counselors under the supervision of faculty.
- Faculty supervisors are licensed psychologists and counselors.

Services Offered

- Individual Counseling
- Couple Counseling
- Family Counseling
- Child/Adolescent Counsel- ing
- Group Counseling with a focus on:
 - Parenting
 - Social skills
 - Anger control
 - Issues of concern to children and adolescents

Hours of Operation

- August-May
 - 9 AM to 9 PM M-Th
 - 9 AM to 12 PM Fri
- Summer hours are similar, but vary.
- The clinic is closed during university vacations and holidays.

All clients have the right to receive timely, competent counseling services consistent with the ethical principles and guidelines established by professional organizations. All counseling services provided at the Counseling Practicum Clinic are guided by the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the American Counseling Association, the American School Counseling Association, the American Rehab Counseling Association, the General Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services, and the Specialty Guidelines for the Delivery of Services by Counseling Psychologists.