

Empowering relationships...

MAY 2020



The Redwood Empire Therapist

RECAMFT is now accepting applications for our monthly trainings for 2020-2021. You can complete an application by visiting our website and clicking the news and events tab on the top of the page.

President's Message Tara D'Orazio, LMFT

We Rise



A lot has had to change about the way RECAMFT reaches our community since the shelter in place order was issued in early March. To keep everyone safe we cancelled our in-person events through May and moved board meetings online. Those first weeks were a scramble as everyone rapidly built home offices, adjusted to a digital caseload, and did what they needed to take care of their households. We saw a big increase of activity on the **ListServ** where members have been posting questions and useful resources, in addition to the usual ISO ("in search of") referral requests. To make things easier to find, I've been experimenting with applying hashtags to new posts. If you see a hashtag like #books, you'll know that's a post about a book recommendation, and if you click on it you'll be able to see all the posts that have been made about books before. Some of the hashtags you might see are #ISO, #groups, #ForRent, #FreeEvent, #training, #books, #CEUs, #info, and #resource. You can add one of these markers to your post by using the -Add Tags- drop down menu on the post creation page. Give it a try! If you still aren't on our ListServ and would like to be, please email a request to join to therapy@recamft.org.

We've been working on making more RECAMFT services available online and are assessing new approaches to continue digital accessibility beyond the current circumstances. Our Administrative Assistant **Joe Ward** has been invaluable in making our transition possible! We have had to make some changes to our monthly meeting schedule as we adapt to distance learning. The speakers for April, May, and June, will be rescheduled for next season, and Past President **Doreen Van Leeuwen** will present online her demonstration of Imago Couples Therapy, which was cancelled last November due to the Kincade Fire. We are still collecting proposals for the 2020/2021 season and Programs Director **Patrick Armstrong** has extended the deadline for applications until June 30, 2020. To see applications details visit our website at www.recamft.org/presentation-application.

Members of the Board will be reaching out to assess the needs of our membership. Please keep an eye out for a survey requesting feedback on how RECAMFT can best provide service and support. While we can't meet in person, there is still plenty we can make happen. **Erica Thomas**, CFO, is posting guided meditation and reflection videos on our official **Facebook** page. They are a beautiful way to relax into your day, find them at www.facebook.com/recamft. At the March meeting I

announced that we were working on a Library page to showcase our Member Authors. I am thrilled that it is now up for viewing! There are lots of great titles by fellow therapists to add to your TBR list!

Thank you to absolutely everyone on the board who has been adaptable to seeing RECAMFT through this new set of challenges. I couldn't do it alone and am so thankful to have all your help. RECAMFT means coming together and we will see this one through just like every fire and flood we have weathered. This new storm shall pass and I am confident we will be better on the other end of it, having been challenged to rise to the occasion. We rise: from the ashes, from the mud, and above the fear. We rise together.

Tara@AthenaCounseling.com 707-992-5008



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REYNA AND FAMILY IN HOMEMADE MASKS**

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TARA AND FAMILY IN THEIR MASKS

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MAKING SPIRITUAL SENSE OF AGING'S SYMPTOMS

Gail Van Buuren, MA, LMFT

Aging is not a thing our youth-oriented culture values much. Becoming an elder can be a process of becoming invisible, ignored and somehow shamed. The aging bodies, the slowed pace, repeated stories, weakening muscles only remind us all that if we do not die before it, we too will enter the time of approaching life's end. We would prefer not to have to think about it too much.



One of my favorite psychology teachers is the Jungian analyst, James Hillman. I like his work because he is full of curiosity. He asks questions that interest him, posits some answers, and watches to see what the response will be. Having written The Soul's Code with the premise that each of us is born with an innate character, he followed up with The Force of Character suggesting that our task in later years is to fulfill and confirm that character. As I began thinking about working symbolically with elders, I realized that confirming that character can be powerfully countershaming. Here are some of the reframes Hillman creates in this book.

Maybe our job as we age is to focus not on the information constantly coming to our attention, but on the intelligence coming to our attention. Hillman suggests that we use our symptoms of aging as vehicles for exploring physical, psychological and spiritual intelligence. He thinks it is "an enormous mistake to read the phenomena of later life as indications of death rather than as initiations into another way of life." What I am trying to say will become clearer as we look at just a few examples. I believe they can help in our shame work with aging individuals and with our own aging process.

Short-term memory loss, long-term gain. Memory seems to get all out of balance as we age. Our short-term memory banks seem to have trouble holding onto new input while our long-term memory banks are pulling out stuff we haven't thought about a lot for ages. What if this is a perfectly normal function of later years? If one of the job descriptions of later years is to review our life, then this shift in memory function makes sense. In *Four Quartets*, T.S. Eliot says "We had the experience but missed the meaning./ And approach to the meaning restores the experience/ In a different form, beyond any

meaning." Therefore, there is a method in the madness of all those long term memories that are continually coming to mind and wanting to be talked about. We need to evaluate what has been and help our mature character come to an understanding of itself.

Waking at night. This is true shadowland material. The Greeks referred to the visitations of Blame, Death, Desire, Despair, Fate, Revenge and Self Recrimination as the children of Nyx, the goddess of night. They may bang on your door in the wee dark hours, demanding entrance and attention. Letting them wake you, receiving their biting attacks, and studying the legitimacy of their claims is hard work indeed. In the light of day, the evidence of their attacks may appear quite different, so we need to wait for that light to evaluate what has emerged from those visits. But enduring their attacks and resolving our own resurfacing memories helps strengthen and embrace character and eventually reduce the shadow material. Keep in mind that facing fear increases Wisdom.

Force of Gravity. It pulls at our bodies as we age and clearly delineates between ascending into life and descending out of it. Time to grow down, literally, toward the grave and towards *gravitas*, serious thoughts. And, as we descend it is a time to see what has been hidden or buried. Time to set aside that "persona" we developed to impress the world, time to release hypocrisy and perceive more of the truth of who we are. This can be extremely uncomfortable and some of us may chose instead to project this material outside ourselves and become absorbed in wicked stories, gossip, or focusing on what others are trying to hide and, thereby, miss the opportunity to bring our own grave matters into the light.

I like how Hillman twists conventional ideas about aging and much of what plagues later years into intelligible insight. By trying to find a home for these experiences, he brings them back to soul which gives them value. Perhaps a more playfully questioning point of view can reframe the picture of our later years, make spiritual sense of aging's symptoms, bring forward the character soul has worked so hard to develop in this life, and vanquish the shadow of the shame of aging.

Gail Van Buuren has a private practice in Sebastopol 707-494-4198 www.gailvbtherapy.com

Are you a book author? RECAMFT wants to feature your book in our Library!

By Laura Strom, Ph.D

The RECAMFT Board is delighted to announce we have created a Library page to feature books written by our members. We will include one book by each author along with links to purchase your book, and to your website. I was charged with creating the page, so I started with authors I knew. The inaugural page features books by all the following RECAMFT members (in no particular order).

- *Hippie Chick: Coming of Age in the 60s* by Ilene English
- *I Love You, Clowns Are Scary: Ho'oponopono for Kids and Other People* by Kitty Wells
- *Dancing with Fire: A Mindful Way to Loving Relationships* by John Amodeo
- *Don't Feed the Monkey Mind: How to Stop the Cycle of Anxiety, Fear and Worry* by Jennifer Shannon
- *Choose Life: Poetry, Prose, and Photography* by Jan Ögren
- *Simon's Crossing: A Novel* by Charles Asher and Dennis Slattery
- *Journaling: A Workbook to Transform Your Self-Esteem* by Dianna Grayer
- *Body, Brain, Love: A Therapist's Workbook for Affect Regulation and Somatic Attachment* by Karen Rachels

Congratulations to all our inaugural authors! We would like to include a book review for each book, particularly if it's written by another member. Please email us if you have written a book you would like to have included in the Library, and send any book reviews to therapy@recamft.org. Visit the Library at <http://recamft.org/Library>. The Library is just one more special benefit for our members - enjoy!



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Preconditions for Trauma – a Video Summary

Tara D’Orazio, LMFT

In this climate of global crisis there has been an outpouring of resources on the topics of trauma and self-care, which is how I came to find Bessel Van der Kolk’s short webinar on “Steering Ourselves and Our Clients through New and Developing Traumas.” It is a very helpful overview of the preconditions that create a traumatic experience. I’ve been able to use the conditions as an assessment tool, guiding which questions I ask to determine a client’s level of coping and inspire interventions to buffer against emerging trauma. In the video, Van der Kolk describes 7 preconditions for a traumatic response, many of which are being currently triggered by the isolation imposed by shelter-in-place orders and the continued exposure of essential service workers to danger. In no particular order the preconditions of trauma are:

Lack of predictability

Immobility

Loss of connection

Numbing or spacing out

Loss of sense of time and sequences

Loss of safety

Loss of sense of purpose

When someone enters a chronic state of unpredictability, life quickly becomes unmanageable. Long term goals are subverted by survival mode’s demands in the present and hope for a foreseeable future diminishes. Developing routines and schedules that set expectations for the future can establish a scaffold into which the rest of our narrative can begin to take form. Planning activities and following through with them creates things to look forward to and breaking large goals down into small check list items can make them more attainable.

Immobility is the experience of being unable to execute the body’s natural fight or flight response. Shelter in Place efforts have many feeling helpless and unable to access their usual coping activities for expending the body’s energy. Van der Kolk suggests activating the body through exercises like walking, stretching, tai chi, or yoga, or using your hands to create something such as a garden, art, or cooking. Without flight available to us he emphasizes the need for self-regulation techniques to help our clients manage the fight response that contributes to an increase in family violence.

As people are unable to gather in public spaces or visit with others, connections we typically rely on may be difficult to access or entirely severed. To counter the devastating effects of loneliness and isolation, he suggests having regular contact with others through phone calls and video conferences. Other options for the more isolated might be letter writing, or if you know someone who is sheltering alone, making a special effort to be in contact with them. Van der Kolk particularly recommends teleconferencing/face timing if it’s available, due to the synchronized and visual experience of getting to see someone’s facial expressions and bodily responses in reaction to your own.

He cautions that numbing out and spacing out, though a natural response to feeling helpless, can lead to the timelessness of a core trauma state in which someone loses a sense of time and sequences. In this state the pain and uncertainty feels like it will be eternally enduring and hopelessness easily finds a home. For this he suggests returning to the body through mindful awareness exercises such as meditation, body scans, and self-noticing. Return to the basics of naming feelings and sensations and notice how sensations in the body change from moment to moment. These exercises restore the inner sense that every moment is different from the next and time goes forward.

He discusses the loss of safety, which is a truth for all of us in terms of the coronavirus being a continued threat without a cure. However, he suggests bringing attention to reaffirming the safety that we do have control over by creating spaces that protect our privacy and our autonomy. Continue to assert boundaries with ourselves and others that keep our bodies, minds, hearts, and essences connected to a sense of personal safety.



KNIT BY TARA IN BLUEBERRY BLUE AND HANGING OUT TOGETHER

Lastly, he reminds us to continue activities that are affirmations of who we are and fortify our sense of purpose. Exploring our hobbies and staying connected to people who remind us that we are parents and children, painters and mathematicians, helpers and caretakers, spiritual guides and comic reliefs.

In each of my sessions I now keep this list in mind and ask my clients about the quality of their connections, their physical activity, the connectivity with their body, their schedules and plans, and their boundaries. If I find them struggling in one of these areas I focus on building up their capacity and scheduling activities that can buffer them against a loss of function in any of these areas. I am also using it as a guide for my own self-care and protection against developing trauma.



SAND TRAY FIGURES AND A SAND TRAY



Contact: Jenny Janssen art4healing@aol.com

Earth Day is April 22nd. To celebrate try a Listening Walk! Go for a quiet walk in your favorite area and see if you can hear the sounds listed below. Can you get a Bingo?

P B L L T M L U U B T N D E I C L C B V
 X B K O F T V A O O U F F G J N E X V C
 A B T R R C T X N G L F W H D S H U P E
 N M S F L D B C B G C E E R N M N C V M
 T Q O K L X B P I E S D G O J O T J Q I
 H F R C F N T Y F Y G T T N E L D G F L
 T L F B G S V O R A X L O K A P O E D Y
 B U T A C D W E R O I Z R N W A L L N D
 W C R Y B F H A W M N B H F H T Y U N I
 G W E N D O L Y N B R O O K S U M A B C
 C E B I P L T H T Z N M A E Y R G C M K
 M B O X A W O A U D R E L O R D E H Y I
 P R R N P J W V O P B I P F I B Y L E N
 K N P P Q P V J T K O C O I T P E O T S
 E O D B P U A N A T I D A I A K Z E E O
 E F L O W A I N I G R I V M D I E X M N
 Y Z A W C X B H J S Y E X U O V N K J H
 D W C S X Y R T E O P O M R V K B K T E
 C Q J I O N Y H W I N S N O E V A P F F
 W J A O V Q V N C U A D L A H O C C R Z

AUDRELORDE
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 LANGSTONHUGHES
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MAYAANGELOU
 POETRY
 RITADOVE
 ROBERTFROST
 RUMI
 TSELIOT
 VIRGINIAWOLF

Prayer for a Marriage

By Steve Scafidi

For Kathleen

When we are old one night and the moon
Arcs over the house like an antique
China saucer and the teacup sun

Follows somewhere far behind
I hope the stars deepen to a shine
So bright you could read by it

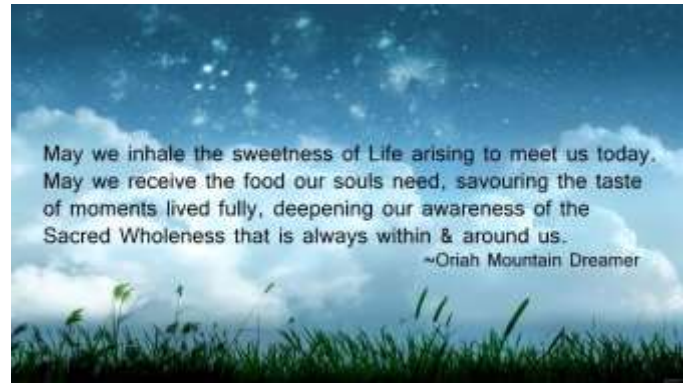
If you liked and the sadnesses
We will have known go away
For a while - in this hour or two

Before sleep - and that we kiss
Standing in the kitchen not fighting
Gravity so much as embodying

Its sweet force, and I hope we kiss
Like we do today knowing so much
Good is said in this primitive tongue

From the wild first surprising ones
To the lower dizzy ten thousand
Infinitely slower ones - and I hope

While we stand there in the kitchen
Making tea and kissing, the whistle
Of the teapot wakes the neighbors



*Life is the dancer,
and you are the Dance.*

~ Eckhart Tolle ~



Empowering relationships...



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