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Our Mission Statement

Promoting health and wholeness through professional counseling,
consultation and education from a Christian perspective.

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socially or not:

- volunteer in his/her activities to see for yourself how they interact with peers and other authority figures.
- have regular conversation about his/her friends
- notice his/her use of personal space and touch
- contact the child's teacher or coach for their perspective on your child's behavior.
- talk to your child about bullying and assess whether they may be bullying others or the victim of a bully
- assess their level of hygiene with what is common among their peers and consider addressing any of these issues.

In most cases, social skills can be taught if

the child does not automatically learn them from experiential social interactions. Sometimes immature social skills are just merely catching up with physical growth and can be improved by involving the child in more social opportunities to develop these skills. Other times these underdeveloped skills need to be addressed more directly in a social skills group or with one-on-one coaching from a school social worker or licensed counselor. In either case, a concerned and loving parent is the most significant advocate for a child or adolescent who wants to fit in, but needs a little help. ■



Karen Suppes sees clients in our Crete location.

New staff...

Doug Van Til, MSW
Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Office hours: Crete, IL location



Doug Van Til, MSW

Doug has extensive experience in providing counseling to students with significant social, emotional, and behavioral problems in the therapeutic special education setting. His experience includes working with students who present problems in the area of ADHD, Aspergers, various mood disorders, trauma, and aggression.

Doug's individual therapy focuses on areas of improving motivation, conflict resolution, and crisis management, and mediation, all toward the goal of improving the student's education experience. Family intervention with a collaborative perspective is a key component to Doug's clinical work.

PRESSING ON...

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14



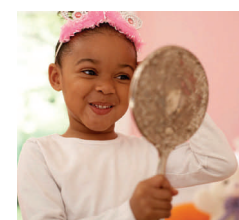
A Publication of Chicago Christian Counseling Center

Mar | Apr 2012

Secret Struggles ~ Eating Disorders

■ by Amy Stuart, MA, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor

Do you know what your child's relationship with food is like? Do you know her secret struggle with wanting to look perfect? Do you know about his desire to look muscular or athletic? Do you know about her fear of "being fat"? Our



relationship with food is complex to say the least and it starts at a very young age. Millions of individuals, men and women, struggle with an eating disorder and many suffer

in silence. If you have concerns about your child's relationship with food these are some behaviors and attitudes you might observe if an eating disorder is present:

- Restricting amount or types of food eaten.
- Signs of bingeing, purging, or secretive eating.
- Avoiding family meal times or eating with friends.
- Withdrawal from family or friends.
- Counting calories or eating only "low-fat" or "healthy" foods.
- Obsession or fear with gaining weight.
- Intense or excessive exercise.
- Poor self-esteem or body image.

The good news is that as a parent there are things you can do to help your child in the fight against developing an eating disorder.

- Examine your own beliefs and behaviors regarding food, weight, physical appearance, body image and exercise.
- Make sure you have moderate eating and exercising habits with a goal to be healthy not thin.
- Do not constantly talk about dieting or weight.
- Stay away from classifying certain types of food as "bad".
- Model a well-balanced diet containing a variety of food and proper portion size.
- Discuss the messages and pressure from the media and Hollywood to be thin.
- Build self-esteem by complimenting, encouraging, and unconditionally loving your child as well as teaching that one's value is based on more than physical appearance. Girls especially need to feel loved by their fathers.
- Cultivate open and honest communication with your child. Establish a relationship in which she feels safe to express any struggles, fears, or concerns.

If you are concerned that your child or someone you know may have an eating disorder try to set up a time to talk with him or her and create a loving and non-judgmental environment in which you express your concerns. Allow your child to talk openly

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and avoid getting into an argument or assigning blame. End the conversation with a reminder of your love for your child and your commitment to fight this battle together.

If your fears are confirmed, seek treatment immediately and begin the healing process to wholeness and a right relationship with food. ■



Amy Stuart sees clients in our Orland Park and Plainfield offices

Amy recommends two website resources:
www.nationaleatingdisorders.org
www.feast-ed.org

Therapy for Children ~ What Happens in There?

Mental Health & Children Series



■ by Janet Irvine, PsyD, Licensed Clinical Psychologist & Clinical Coordinator

Children and adolescents are brought to therapy for a variety of reasons. Parents often seek help about concerns they have about their children, including negative behavior at home, poor academic progress, adjustment to divorce or death, and any number of mental health or behavioral problems. Professionals may also refer for these same issues.

The first appointment is with a parent or guardian, without the child. Not having the child there avows parents to speak freely about their concerns. The therapist conducts an interview regarding the child's major issues or worries. Reviewing school records and a thorough developmental history is also part of this interview.

On the second session the therapist meets the child with the parent. It involves reviewing the positive side of



the child. As the session ensues, the parent is asked what worries them about the child. The child may or may not join in the discussion but prefer to play with toys, or sit quietly (or sullenly!) Generally the parent is asked to leave the room and the therapist plays a game or simply "chats." Once the child is at ease, the parent re-enters. Usually I set a goal to try until our next session. Often I create charts targeted at replacing one or two negative behaviors with those that are appropriate. I assure them that if this is not achievable between now and the next appointment, we will figure other things out to make sure there is success.

At the third session the parents, child and I assess how well the child achieved the goal. Most of the time, there is enthusiastic conversation as the parents and child discusses the positive events that occurred.

Other sessions might include reinforcing the behavior we worked on, or adding other



behaviors that need improving. Many times, therapy involves parent training, using good disciplinary techniques, and ways to handle annoying or upsetting behaviors.

If no improvement is noted after 3 or 4 sessions, I suggest having the parents and a teacher at school fill out some inventories (requiring true/false responses.) This helps pin-point underlying issues. Using the results, the parent and I decide collaboratively what might be beneficial to the child, including increased

accommodations at school or sometimes medication.

Child therapy requires a team effort with lots of input from the parents, child, and teachers as the therapist attempts to define the issues and work on problem solving. It is challenging, gratifying work! ■



Janet Irvine enjoys working with children and families in our Orland Park location.

The Significance of Social Skills



■ by Karen Suppes, MA, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor



We can probably all remember the kid who had a hard time fitting in. He always spoke too much or not enough. She could never initiate a friendship or maintain one for long. They were either too aggressive and we called them "bully", or

they were too passive and were bullied. Perhaps, we were that kid that struggled to find their place.

As adults, we know the value of connecting with others. We were created for it. We thrive when we feel wanted by others and part of meaningful relationships. Children and adolescents are the same way. It can often be hard to navigate as adults around all our social relationships. And it is even that much harder as a child whose social skills are still developing or underdeveloped.

Social skills include using appropriate non-

verbal communication, proper use of personal space and touch when interacting with others, initiating and keeping a conversation going, addressing others respectfully, having empathy for others, knowing how to make and keep friends, understanding the harms of bullying and the ways to deal or cope with being bullied.

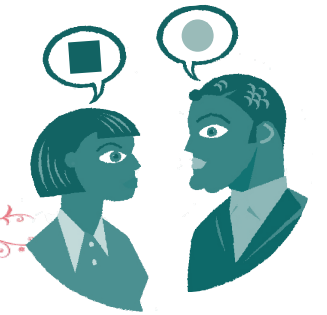
Studies show that without proper intervention, poor social skills can lead to poor academic and behavioral habits, social phobias, and even depression.

To detect whether your child is fitting in

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What LANGUAGE does your spouse speak?

Marriage Tips Series



■ by Kimberly Kooyenga, MSW, Licensed Social Worker

The old saying that "men are from Mars and women are from Venus" may seemingly ring true in many marriages when it comes to communication. Sometimes no matter how hard you try to show your spouse that you love him or her, your partner doesn't get the message. You may start thinking, "What am I doing wrong? Why doesn't my spouse understand?"

The truth is that what you express to be love may not be perceived as love by your spouse. For a woman, folding laundry and preparing lunches may be an expression of love. For a man, physical intimacy may be his expression of love. Each person prefers to be loved and demonstrates love in his or her unique way. You and your spouse probably don't prefer to receive or express love in the same way. The question arises, then, how can spouses learn to understand each other's preferred language? The answer to that question starts by identifying the variety of ways spouses demonstrate love.

Gary Chapman explains differences in people's preferences for love in his book *The Five Love Languages*. He identifies five

main ways that individuals prefer to get and give expressions of love:

- Quality time,
- words of affirmation,
- gifts,
- acts of service,
- and physical touch.

Quality time includes things like date nights and uninterrupted conversations. Words of affirmation can include compliments and encouraging words. Homemade items, flowers or jewelry would be appropriate for a spouse who prefers gifts. Acts of service include completing chores or "honey-do" lists and doing little favors. Massages, cuddling on the couch, and holding hands are all ways to show love with physical touch.

If you do not know your preferred love language, think about how you try to demonstrate your love to your spouse and what you most frequently ask from your spouse. Chances are good that whatever you do to show love to your spouse and whatever you ask most from your spouse,

you wish your spouse would do regularly to show love.

It is important that you also know your spouse's love language. Knowing your spouse's love language can close the communication gap, so you no longer feel as though you are communicating with someone from a different planet. Ask your spouse what things you do that are the most meaningful to him or her and what he or she wishes you would do more often. Also, pay attention to the things your spouse asks of you. Once you identify their preferred love language, you can take steps to demonstrate love in their language and watch as your spouse finally gets your heartfelt message. ■



Kimberly Kooyenga sees clients in our Evergreen Park and South Holland offices

Chapman, G. (2004). *The Five Love Languages*. Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing.



MARRIAGE TIP | Know Your Spouse's LOVE LANGUAGE !

A Source of HOPE

■ by Mel Jonkman, MDiv, Executive Director

As I look out my window today I'm grateful for the sunshine and the warm temperatures. Warm winds have begun to blow, flowers are blooming, trees are budding and signs of new life appear all around us. I rejoice in this because I am not a big fan of winter. It isn't the cold that bother me; it is the lifelessness of everything around me.

During the season of winter I live with a longing for the return of spring and the life that will reappear. We as Christians are

living in the season of expectation as well. All of us are touched by the pain of living in a broken world. There are days when that brokenness can overwhelm us and rob us of the joy of living. We can feel dead inside and hopeless about the future.

However, I want you to know that **there is hope**. At the Chicago Christian Counseling we have many qualified therapists who will work with you so that you can experience renewal and joy once again. I also want you to know that there is another source of

hope. Jesus, who died and rose again, offers us new life. Because of His work, we live with the promise and sure hope that there is coming a day when all that is broken will be replaced with unending perfection as we stand in the presence of our Savior. ■



Mel Jonkman, MDiv Executive Director