



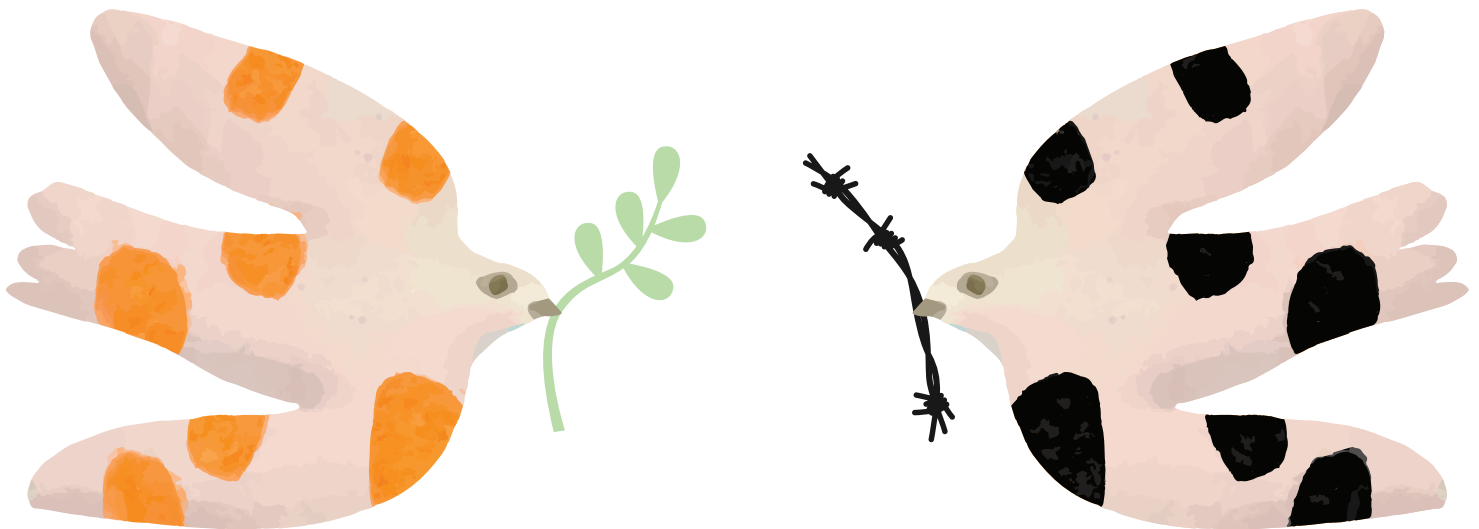
monitor on

GST# R127612802

psychology

PSYCHOLOGY IN WAR ZONES

PAGE 40



PLUS

THE MILITARY'S AMBITIOUS
PLAN TO STEM ASSAULTS

PAGE 26

THE DEMOGRAPHIC CLIFF

PAGE 22

YOUTH SUBSTANCE MISUSE

PAGE 48

INTERGENERATIONAL
TEAMWORK

PAGE 56

Compared Rates Lately?

APA Members
Get a 20% Discount



Scan to Get
a Quote

Coverage Designed Specifically for Psychologists

- Professional Risk Managers are available to answer questions with no appointment required
- Discounted online Risk Management Courses
- 20% Discount for Members of APA, ABPP, and TPA
- 10% New Business Discount
- 35% New Graduate Discount
- 35% Part-Time Discount
- Many more combinable discounts available

* Protect against Cyber-Attacks with a Cyber Suite Endorsement *

AmericanProfessional.com

1.800.421.6694



American Professional Agency

LEADERS IN MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

Corporate Supporter



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

APA Merch



Shop online at apamerchstore.com

Save 10% when you use code **MONTEN** at checkout



Show your love of psychology with unique swag from the APA Merch Store. Choose from a collection of fresh t-shirts, stylish drinkware, colorful socks, and more!



@APA

RESOURCES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND NEWS FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS FROM APA



How to Reach Us

Answers to many of your questions may be found on APA's website: www.apa.org; for phone service call (800) 374-2721; for story ideas or comments, contact Editor in Chief Trent Spiner at tspinner@apa.org.



SHAPING TECH

Psychology at the Consumer Electronics Show 2024

APA and the Consumer Technology Association presented a series of science conversations at the 2024 Consumer Electronics Show (CES), the world's leading technology conference, held in January in Las Vegas. APA CEO Arthur C. Evans, Jr., PhD, and a number of other psychologists spoke about psychology's role in technology, how tech challenges are often rooted in aspects of human behavior and all the ways in which psychology is an essential part of technology invention, development, implementation, and adoption. From privacy and machine learning to social media and gaming, psychologists are providing research-backed answers to light the way.

See all of the exciting details about APA's Digital Health Summit at CES at <https://ces.apa.org/digital-health-summit> and take a deep dive with videos of each session at <https://ces.apa.org/#Program>.

SPREAD THE NEWS

APA is Now on Instagram and Threads

Follow @APA_org for the latest news and trends in psychology, cutting-edge research from the field, and science-backed strategies that boost well-being and mental health. Help us improve people's lives by sharing our posts with your friends and contacts. APA also has large audiences on LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, and X, formerly Twitter, where we promote the advancement, communication, and application of psychological science and much more.

MENTORING

Research and Grant-Writing Support

The APA Minority Fellowship Program is seeking applicants for its Leadership and Education Advancement Program (LEAP) for Diverse Scholars. LEAP is a mentoring and leadership development program for early career social and behavioral scientists from underrepresented racial and ethnic populations. Applicants must have a research focus that aligns with the mission of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Fellowship benefits also include training and travel funds. Applications are due March 17.

Learn more about the eligibility requirements and apply at www.apa.org/pi/mfp/leap.

CALL TO ACTION

Share Your Research on Education

Psychological science can and does make a huge impact in K–12 education settings. To maximize that impact, APA seeks to collaborate with any researcher whose work could help make a difference in our nation's schools and the lives of educators and students.

If you have conducted research in K–12 schools or have findings applicable to these settings, reach out to Nicole Barnes, PhD, senior director of APA's Center for Psychology in Schools and Education, at nbarnes@apa.org.



IMPACT

Making a Difference for Psychology

Three members of APA's Advocacy team were named to *The Hill* magazine's list of the Top Lobbyists of 2023 for the results they've delivered for APA:

Alix Ginsburg, MPH, senior director for congressional and federal relations & special projects, **Katherine McGuire, MA**, chief advocacy officer, and **Kenneth Polishchuk, MA**, senior director for congressional and federal relations & education policy lead.

Learn more about APA's advocacy work at www.apaservices.org/advocacy/newsletter.

ON THE PODCAST

How To Fail Well

Remember New Coke or Colgate frozen lasagna? History is littered with such commercial failures. Harvard Business School professor **Amy Edmondson, PhD**, author of *Right Kind of Wrong: The Science of Failing Well*, and organizational psychologist **Samuel West, PhD**, curator of the Museum of Failure, join APA's *Speaking of Psychology* podcast to talk about commerce's biggest flops; the difference between simply failing and failing well; and how individuals and organizations can get past the fear of failure to recognize its potential upsides and learn from mistakes.

Register at at.apa.org/iyr to win a free copy of Magination Press's upcoming title, *Quiet as Mud*. The picture book, geared toward ages 4–8, was inspired by a quote by legendary author Margaret Wise Brown, and helps introverted children navigate life in a loud world. Sign up by March 31. Winners will be notified by Goodreads.



PRESIDENT Cynthia de las Fuentes, PhD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Arthur C. Evans Jr., PhD
CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER Alicia Aebersold

EDITORIAL

EDITOR IN CHIEF Trent Spiner
MANAGING EDITOR Susan Straight
SENIOR EDITORS Lindsey Allen, Jamie Chamberlin
ART DIRECTOR Callie Strobel
DESIGN Sara Deneweth, Selena Robleto, Ciera Schibi
COPYEDITORS Jenny Miyasaki, Shannon Pennefeather, Jane Sunderland
PRODUCTION MANAGER Peter S. Kovacs
EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE Barb Fischer

APA MEDIA AND EVENT SALES

DIRECTOR OF MEDIA SALES Jodi Ashcraft
SENIOR MEDIA SALES MANAGER James Boston
APA PSYCCAREERS OPERATIONS MANAGER Amelia Dodson
RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER Nancy Onyewu
RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING SALES REPRESENTATIVE Shawn Deadwiler II
SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER Robin Tiberio
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR Eric Fuller
DESIGN & PRODUCTION Rebecca Halloran
MEDIA & EVENT SALES COORDINATOR Brianna Garrison

The *Monitor on Psychology* (ISSN-1529-4978) is the magazine of the American Psychological Association (APA) and is published 8 times per year—January/February combined, March, April/May combined, June, July/August combined, September, October, and November/December combined. Publications office, headquarters, and editorial offices are at 750 First St., N.E., Washington, DC 20002-4242. APA purchases only "first publication rights" for photos and illustrations. Therefore, it cannot grant permission to reuse any illustrative material. APA holds the copyright for text material in *Monitor on Psychology* articles. Permission requests to reproduce text material should be addressed to APA, Permissions Office, at the APA address. Telephone numbers: Headquarters (202) 336-5500; TDD (202) 336-6123; Display advertising (202) 336-5714; Classified advertising (202) 336-5564; and Subscriptions (202) 336-5600. The views expressed in the *Monitor on Psychology* are those of the authors and may not reflect the official policies or positions of the American Psychological Association or the *Monitor on Psychology*. No endorsement of those views should be inferred unless specifically identified as the official policy or position of the American Psychological Association. The publication of any advertisement by APA is an endorsement neither of the advertiser nor of the product. APA endorses equal employment opportunity practices, and we reserve the right to edit all copy and to refuse ads that are not in consonance with the principles of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Subscription to the *Monitor on Psychology* (\$6) is included in the annual dues and fees for all APA members and student affiliates. Individual subscription rate is \$50; individual surface rate is \$107; and individual airmail rate is \$139. Institutional subscription rate is \$93; institutional surface rate is \$203; and institutional airmail rate is \$235. Single copies are \$20 each. For \$16 extra, the *Monitor on Psychology* will be mailed first-class to subscribers in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. For \$75 extra, airmail is available to foreign subscribers (other than Canada and Mexico). Periodical postage is paid at Washington, DC, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Monitor on Psychology* Subscriptions Department, 750 First St., N.E., Washington, DC 20002-4242. CANADA SUBSCRIPTIONS: Canada Post Agreement Number 40036331. Send change of address information and blocks of undeliverable copies to PO Box 1051, Fort Erie, ON L2A 6C7. Printed in the United States of America. ©2024 by APA. Address editorial inquiries to the *Monitor on Psychology* editor, and advertising and subscription inquiries to *Monitor on Psychology*/advertising or *Monitor on Psychology*/subscriptions.

Please recycle this magazine. If you wish to go paperless and receive only the digital edition of the *Monitor*, please email membership@apa.org or call (800) 374-2721. Answers to many member-related questions can be found on APA's website: www.apa.org.

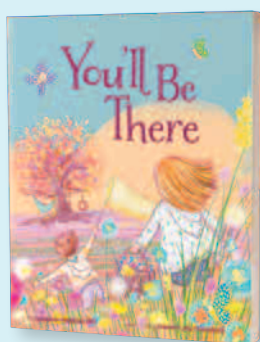
New Children's Books

Mamie Phipps Clark, Champion for Children

LYNNETTE MAWHINNEY
ILLUSTRATED BY NEIL EVANS

This inspiring graphic novel chronicles the life of the pioneering woman who helped eliminate separate but equal and encourages readers to carry on Mamie's legacy and become champions for themselves and others in their community.

Paperback | 978-1-4338-3048-8 | List: \$18.99 | APA Member: \$14.24



You'll Be There

AMANDA RAWSON HILL

This evocative, helpful picture book offers gentle and positive ways to cope with grief by incorporating a lost loved one's presence into future life experiences.

Hardcover | 978-1-4338-4388-4
List: \$18.99 | APA Member: \$14.24



All the Pieces

When a Loved One Dies from Substance Use

HALLIE RIGGS
ILLUSTRATED BY ADRIANA PREDOI

A picture book to help children understand the loss of a loved one due to drug overdose.

Hardcover | 978-1-4338-4218-4
List: \$19.99 | APA Member: \$14.99



Quiet as Mud

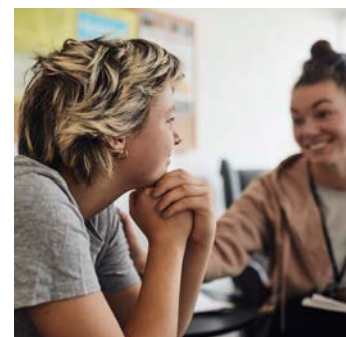
JANE YOLEN
ILLUSTRATED BY NICOLE WONG

This is a gentle introduction to the concept of being an introvert, as well as an invitation for readers to observe and imagine their inner world and the world around them.

Hardcover | 978-1-4338-4153-8
List: \$18.99 | APA Member: \$14.24

Features

MARCH 2024



48 NEW APPROACHES TO YOUTH SUBSTANCE MISUSE

Psychologists and other experts are finding new holistic ways to steer kids away—or at least keep them from dying—from illicit substances.



56 PROMOTING COOPERATION BETWEEN GENERATIONS

Psychologists are working to solve pressing problems such as loneliness and climate change by bridging generational divides and combining the strengths of older and younger people.



COVER STORY

AIDING A WAR-TORN WORLD

With the violence and war that remain rampant in some parts of the world, psychological science can help us better understand why these conflicts happen, inform how best to rebuild communities and nations, and aid in preventing future violence. *See page 40*

ON THE COVER: JORM SANGSORN/GETTY IMAGES



Using social psychology to improve public health. Page 31

- 2 @APA: THE HOT LIST
- 8 PRESIDENT'S COLUMN
- 10 UPDATE FROM THE CEO

RESEARCH

- 11 IN BRIEF
- 19 DATAPOINT
- 76 BY THE NUMBERS

NEWS

- 20 ROSALYNN CARTER'S ENDURING LEGACY
- 22 PREPPING FOR A STEEP DROP IN STUDENTS
- 26 THE U.S. MILITARY'S AMBITIOUS PREVENTION PLAN
- 33 JUDICIAL NOTEBOOK

PEOPLE

- 31 5 QUESTIONS FOR KATHLEEN ETHIER
- 64 PSYCHOLOGISTS IN THE NEWS

CE CORNER

- 34 TREATING AUTISTIC ADULTS

CAREER

- 65 CONSULTING IN HOLLYWOOD

EMPLOYMENTS ADS

- 73 THE BEST JOBS IN PSYCHOLOGY



IMPACT

U.S. MILITARY HIRING THOUSANDS OF PREVENTION EXPERTS

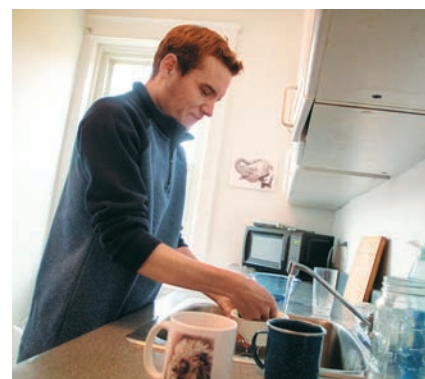
The U.S. military has launched an ambitious effort to hire and train more than 2,000 experts focused on preventing sexual assault and other harmful behaviors within its ranks. *See page 26*



Psychology in Hollywood. Page 65



Rosalynn Carter's legacy. Page 20



Treating autistic adults. Page 34

Speaking of PSYCHOLOGY™

Today's most significant psychological research explained.

Hear from some of psychology's most innovative thinkers on APA's flagship podcast.

Recent can't miss interviews include:

Stopping the spread of misinformation

Sander van der Linden, PhD

Treatment and recovery from serious mental illness

Kim Mueser, PhD

How to have great conversations

Charles Duhigg and Michael Yeomans, PhD

Caregiving as a source of stress and strength

William Haley, PhD

OCD myths and realities

Dean McKay, PhD, and Uma Chatterjee

What's the difference between guilt and shame?

June Tangney, PhD

How social media affects teens' mental health

Jacqueline Nesi, PhD

How to combat microaggressions

Derald Wing Sue, PhD

Listen and subscribe on Apple, YouTube, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts.



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD

Council members went to Capitol Hill in February to urge policymakers to support legislation advancing population health

BY CYNTHIA DE LAS FUENTES, PhD



Establishing population health as a framework for the United States is critical, and one of the best ways APA and psychologists can make a big impact on population health is through advocacy.

Over the past several years, APA's Council of Representatives—our association's legislative body—has transformed the way they work so that their efforts directly relate to the impact they want to see on our discipline and in our society.

Those changes led to a first: More than 40 council members joined APA's advocacy team to meet with legislators before council's biannual meeting. The meetings allowed psychologists to speak with lawmakers and staff on Capitol Hill about the issues critical to our field and advancing well-being for our communities. As a former Congressional Fellow with the Women's Research and Education Institute, I know how direct constituent interactions have a tremendous influence on lawmakers' decisions on whether to sponsor or vote for a piece of legislation.

For this event, we discussed recent council resolutions on health equity, child and adolescent health, and adolescent employment. We asked our legislators to:

■ Increase funding for the federal Graduate Psychology Education program, which trains health service psychologists in interdisciplinary behavioral health for placement into community-based primary care settings working with underserved populations.

■ Sponsor the Youth Mental Health Research Act, a piece of legislation developed by APA Services that authorizes \$500 million over 5 years for the creation of a national Youth Mental Health Research Initiative. The initiative aims to

guide long-term mental health recovery efforts, better target preventive interventions for those at risk of developing mental health challenges, and to improve treatments for children.

■ Keep youth safe by increasing funding for child labor violation enforcement efforts.

We must all educate our legislators about the most critical needs of our profession and about the issues we care about. I invite you to spend 10 minutes practicing your advocacy skills. Support APA Services by emailing your federal lawmakers about these and other important issues. Find more information on APA Advocacy Alerts and contacting your member of Congress at www.apa-services.org/advocacy/actions. ■



● **Dr. de las Fuentes** is the 2024 APA president and works as a licensed psychologist in independent practice in Austin, Texas.



How Will You Partner with APF?



Apply

Apply for one of APF's 90+ Programs to fund your research.



Review

Give back with your time by joining a review committee.



Join

Become a Foundation Insider and hear about upcoming events and exciting news first!



Give

Give directly today or reach out to our philanthropy team about a planned gift.

Visit apf.apa.org to join us today!

The American Psychological Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization (EIN: 52-6051733). Your gift is tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law. Please direct all questions to foundation@apa.org.

PSYCHOLOGY SHINES AT CES 2024

Our presence at the world's largest consumer tech fair will chart a safer, ethical path for humanity's connection with new technology

BY ARTHUR C. EVANS JR., PhD



Psychology is playing a critical and unique role in shaping how people interact with rapidly developing technologies that are changing the way we work, learn, build, connect, and live. As the science of human behavior, our field is the best positioned to help integrate human factors into generative AI, robotics, connectivity, and other technologies that will have a profound impact

on society. Combining our science with new technology offers unprecedented opportunities to enhance well-being throughout the world.

As part of our strategic plan to bring psychology to where it is needed most, APA presented a series of conversations at the 2024 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, which drew 135,000 attendees from around the world and is the global proving ground for new technology. Psychological scientists shared research on the ethics of artificial intelligence, protecting kids online, harnessing digital interventions to improve health, and more. Psychology having a seat at the table helped tech innovators understand our field's role in maximizing the benefits and reducing potential harms of AI and other new technologies. Tech media took notice, writing about how our field can help shape ethical norms for developers and how government and industry can make tech easier to use.

Through our ongoing participation in discussions around new technologies, APA is signaling that psychology is crucial to understanding how people will interact with and be affected by emerging technologies. This level of inclusion helps strengthen psychology as a science and ensures the human element does not get left behind as innovations rapidly advance.

CES is just the beginning. Psychology will need to continue to make our broad relevance known and secure a seat at every table where policies, products, and services are being shaped.

Think about how you can engage with these latest developments in technology. These incredible innovations can unlock new areas of research and practice. They can expand how we develop, evaluate, and apply our expertise to the critical issues of the day. They will allow us to connect our work to some of society's most pivotal issues. Tech is a moving target: Getting deeply involved in these discussions now will keep psychology and the human element top of mind as tech innovators continue to dazzle the world. ■

● **Arthur C. Evans Jr., PhD**, is the chief executive officer of APA. You can follow him on LinkedIn.



ALICIA NOWAKOWSKA/GETTY IMAGES

In Brief



ANGER IS (SOMETIMES) A GIFT

While often perceived as a negative emotion, anger can sometimes help people achieve challenging goals, suggests research in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Researchers conducted five studies involving 1,020 participants in the United States and analyzed survey data from 1,405 respondents. In each experiment, researchers elicited either an emotional response (such as anger, amusement, desire, or sadness) or a neutral emotional state, and then presented participants with a challenging goal. Across all studies, anger improved participants'

ability to reach their goals compared with a neutral emotional condition in various challenging situations but had no effect when tasks were easier. In some cases, elicited anger was associated with increased scores or shorter response times. In other experiments, anger increased cheating to achieve a better outcome and motivated participants to take action to avoid a financial loss. Amusement and desire were also associated with increased goal attainment in some, but not all, challenging situations.

DOI: 10.1037/pspa0000350

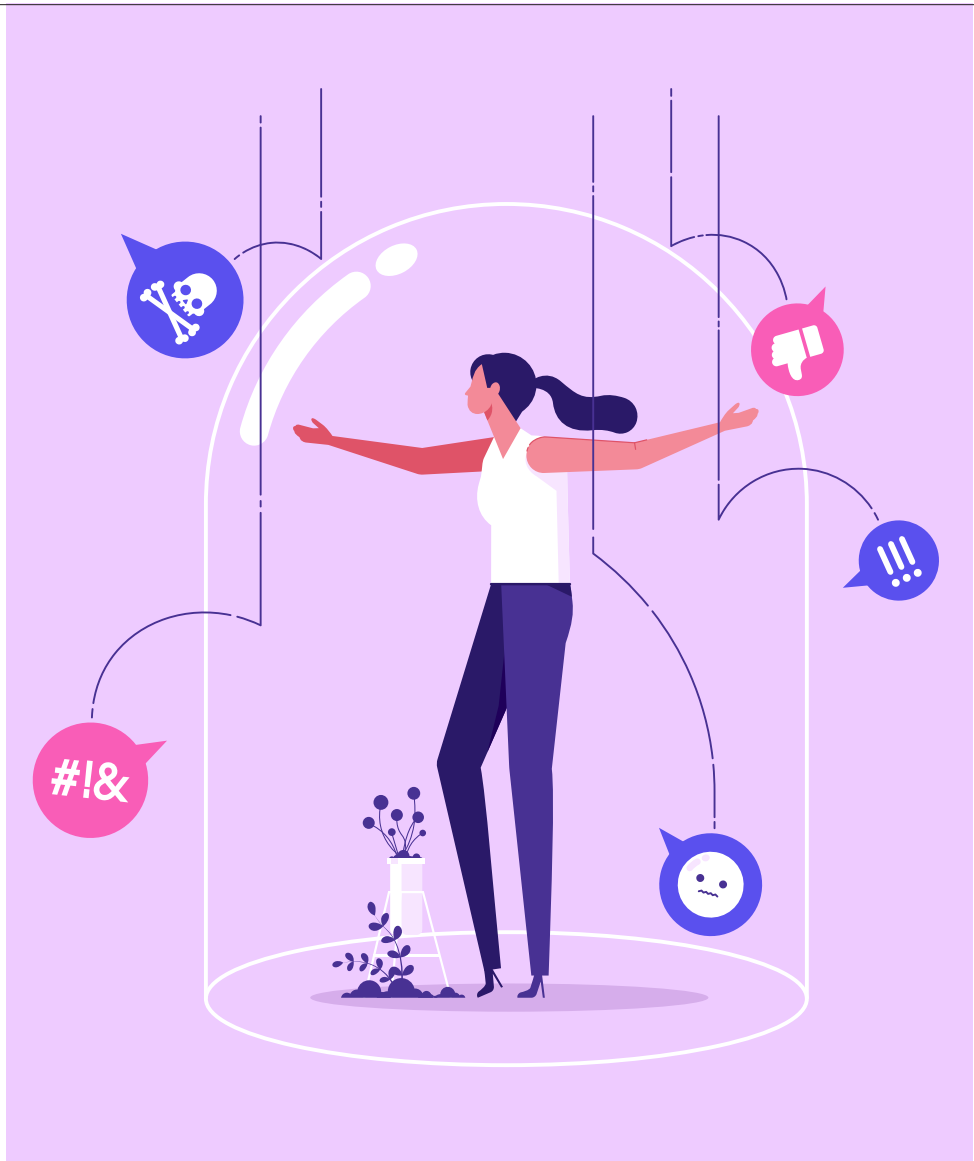
BLOCK IT OUT

Suppressing unwanted thoughts may be good for people’s mental health, suggests research in *Science Advances*. Researchers trained 120 online participants from 16 countries to practice inhibitory control, or intentionally overriding reflexive thoughts about worrying situations. Before the training, participants described scenarios that might plausibly occur in their lives over the next 2 years—20 negative fears and 20 positive hopes—as well as associated cue words for each. When presented with the related cue word for a negative or positive scenario, participants actively blocked out or vividly imagined the scenario, respectively. Participants reported that suppressed situations were less vivid, evoked less fear, and occupied participants’ thoughts less. Participants also reported less anxiety, negative affect, and depression, with the latter benefit persisting at 3 months. Participants high in trait anxiety and pandemic-related post-traumatic stress saw the largest and longest-lasting mental health benefits.

DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.adh529

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

According to a study conducted with contemporary hunter-gatherer societies and published in *Developmental Psychology*, infants and toddlers may be evolutionarily primed to thrive with high levels of personal care and attention from multiple caregivers. Researchers analyzed the social connections among 18 infants in the



Mbendjele BaYaka hunter-gatherer society in the Republic of Congo. They found that infants in this society receive attentive care and physical contact for nearly 9 hours per day from up to 20 different caregivers. Caregiver-to-child ratios were often 5 to 1, although each child had just a handful of core caregivers who provided consistent attention. They also found that a mother’s support system would help respond to more

Actively suppressing unwanted thoughts may be good for people’s mental health.

than half of her baby’s crying episodes. In addition, older children and adolescents are heavily involved in caring for infants.

DOI: 10.1037/dev0001601

POOR EMOTION REGULATION PERPETUATES DEPRESSION

Research in the *Journal of Psychopathology and Clinical Science* indicates that while depressed people appear capable of coping

with intense emotions, they often use emotion-regulation strategies that decrease pleasant feelings. In the first of two studies, researchers taught 77 adults in the United States, about half of whom had major depressive disorder, the unhealthy strategies of distraction and rumination—most often utilized by those with depression. Depressed people were more likely to independently choose distraction when recalling positive events. When instructed to pick the strategy most likely to make them feel happier, however, their choices resembled those of mentally healthy participants. In the second study with 120 participants, the researchers

again found depressed individuals were more likely to distract themselves, avoiding positive emotions and instead ruminating on negative feelings. The researchers hypothesize that depressed people use nonoptimal emotion-regulation strategies for a variety of reasons, including fear of happiness, a feeling they don’t deserve happiness, and familiarity with negative moods.

DOI: 10.1037/abn0000835

EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION ACROSS COUNTRIES

The display of emotions serves different purposes across cultures, suggests research in *Emotion*. In the first of two studies, researchers asked 203

Unintended pregnancies can take a toll on the postpartum mental health of new fathers, including increased risk of depression, anxiety, stress, and even post-traumatic stress disorder.

Chileans, 197 Mexicans, and 198 Americans of European descent about their emotional responses to different situations. Latin Americans expressed positive socially engaging emotions that foster connections and strengthen social bonds, particularly in response to adverse events affecting others. U.S. participants conveyed positive socially disengaging emotions, such as pride, especially in reaction to personally favorable events. In the second study, the researchers administered the same questionnaire from the first study to 175 Colombians, 204 Americans of European descent, and 178 Japanese. This study replicated findings from the first study. In addition, Japanese participants were found to express positive emotions less than others but displayed a higher tendency to express negative socially engaging emotions, such as guilt and shame, compared with Colombians and European Americans.

DOI: 10.1037/emo0001302

SURPRISE PREGNANCIES CAN MAKE DADS SAD

According to research in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, unintended pregnancies take a toll on the postpartum mental health of new fathers. Researchers performed a meta-analysis of 23 studies with 8,085 fathers from numerous countries that examined the relationship between the men’s intention to father a child and their mental health during the first 3 postpartum years. They found that fathers whose partners



experienced unintended pregnancies were more than twice as likely to face mental health issues compared with those whose partners had planned pregnancies, including depression, anxiety, stress, and even post-traumatic stress disorder. These issues persisted for up to 1 year following the child's birth. This effect was higher for men in low- and middle-income countries than for those in high-income countries, but it did not depend on whether the men were first-time fathers or not.

DOI: 10.1016/j.jad.2023.06.065

EYEBALLING FOUR ITEMS IS EASY, BUT FIVE IS HARD

According to research in *Nature Human Behaviour*, people's brains use one mechanism to eyeball four or fewer items and a different one for sizing up five or more—which partly explains why doing the latter is harder. Researchers recruited 17 patients undergoing epilepsy treatment in Germany. They recorded the activity of temporal lobe neurons in the patients' brains while they viewed images of anywhere from zero to nine dots on a screen for half a second and asked them whether they had seen an odd or even number of items. Participants' answers were much more accurate when they saw four or fewer dots. The brain activity revealed that neurons specializing in numbers of four or fewer responded very specifically and selectively to their preferred number. Neurons specializing in recognizing between five and nine items responded strongly not only when the preferred

number of items was presented, but also to item numbers immediately adjacent to the neuron's preferred number.

DOI: 10.1038/s41562-023-01709-3

FATTY FOODS' REWARDING TEXTURE

Research in the *Journal of Neuroscience* indicates that a brain region involved in reward processing helps guide eating behavior by responding to fatty foods' smooth texture. Researchers assessed the smoothness of milkshakes with varying sugar and fat content by placing samples between pig tongues and measuring the friction generated while sliding the tongues across each other. They then asked 22 participants in the United Kingdom to sample the same shakes and report how much they would pay for each. Functional MRI brain scans revealed that activity patterns in the brain's orbitofrontal cortex reflected both the drinks' textures and the values that participants assigned to them. These results can drive the design of low-calorie fat-replacement foods that mimic the mouthfeel of dietary fat and the brain's reward circuitry.

DOI: 10.1523/JNEUROSCI.1473-23.2023

A brain region involved in reward processing helps guide eating behavior by responding to fatty foods' smooth texture. These results can drive the design of low-calorie fat-replacement foods that mimic the mouthfeel of dietary fat and the brain's reward circuitry.



SCHIZOPHRENIA AND SUBSTANCE USE

According to a study in *JAMA Psychiatry*, people without a history of psychotic disorders had a significantly higher risk of developing a schizophrenia spectrum disorder after an emergency department (ED) visit for substance use, especially cannabis, with and without accompanying psychosis. Researchers analyzed health records of 9.8 million individuals without a history of psychosis or schizophrenia who were 14 to 65 years old and living in Canada from 2008 to 2022. There were 407,737 individuals with first-time ED visits for substance use, of which 13,784 (3.4%) visits were for substance-induced psychosis. Individuals with substance-induced psychosis were at a 163-fold increased risk of being diagnosed with schizophrenia within 3 years compared with the general population. Individuals with an ED visit for substance use without psychosis had a 9.8-fold increased relative risk of being diagnosed with schizophrenia. Cannabis use was associated with the highest risk of being diagnosed with schizophrenia among individuals with an ED visit for substance use with psychosis (241.6-fold increased risk) and the third-highest risk among individuals with an ED visit for substance use without psychosis (14.3-fold increased risk). Younger males had the highest risk of being diagnosed with schizophrenia, particularly those who had been using cannabis.

DOI: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2023.3582

MAXIM KRICAKO/GETTY IMAGES

ADHD, OLD AGE, AND CAR CRASHES

A study in *JAMA Network Open* indicates that older adults with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) receive more traffic tickets and are involved in more car crashes compared with older adults without ADHD. Researchers analyzed data recorded by devices installed in drivers' vehicles and annual self-assessments of driving incidents from 2,832 adults ages 65 to 79 in the United States. About 2.6% of these individuals had a diagnosis of ADHD. Using this data, the researchers found that, compared with age-matched controls, older adult drivers with ADHD had a 7% increased risk of hard-braking events, a 102% increased risk of traffic tickets, and a 74% increased risk of car crashes.

DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.36960

SHORT SLEEP, MORE DEPRESSION

People who sleep 5 hours or less each night face a 2.5-fold higher chance of developing depression, according to a study in *Translational Psychiatry*. Researchers compared genetic and health data from 7,146 adults in the United Kingdom with an average age of 65 to genome-wide association studies identifying thousands of genetic variants linked to a higher likelihood of developing depression and short (less than 5 hours) or long (more than 9 hours) sleep. They found that people sleeping 5 hours or less were 2.5 times more likely to develop depressive symptoms over a 4- to 12-year

MGKAYA/GETTY IMAGES



period than those who slept 5 to 9 hours, while people with depressive symptoms were more likely to suffer from short sleep. The researchers also found a link between sleeping long and developing depressive symptoms, with participants sleeping longer than 9 hours being 1.5 times more likely to develop depressive symptoms than those who sleep an average of 7 hours. However, depressive symptoms were not associated with sleeping longer 4 to 12 years later.

DOI: 10.1038/s41398-023-02622-z

GAY AND BISEXUAL CHILDREN BINGE EAT MORE

A study in the *Journal of Eating Disorders* indicates that gay and bisexual adolescents are more than twice as likely to have a binge-eating disorder compared with heterosexual peers. Researchers asked 10,197 adolescents ages 10 to 14 in the United States about their sexual orientation. They also asked

Older adults with ADHD receive more traffic tickets and are involved in more car crashes compared with older adults without ADHD.

parents about their children's eating behaviors. Low household income, identifying as gay or bisexual, and being of Native American descent were associated with more engagement in binge-eating behaviors. Low household income and identifying as gay or bisexual were associated with a more than 2-fold increased risk of developing a binge-eating disorder.

DOI: 10.1186/s40337-023-00904-x

PARENTS WORRIED ABOUT INTERNET ADDICTION

Research in *JAMA Network Open* suggests that twice as many parents of adolescents are concerned about internet addiction compared with substance addiction. Researchers surveyed 1,005 parents of children and adolescents ages 9 to 15 in the United States in June 2022 about daily internet use as well as perceived benefits and concerns of internet use. They found that more than half of parents were concerned about

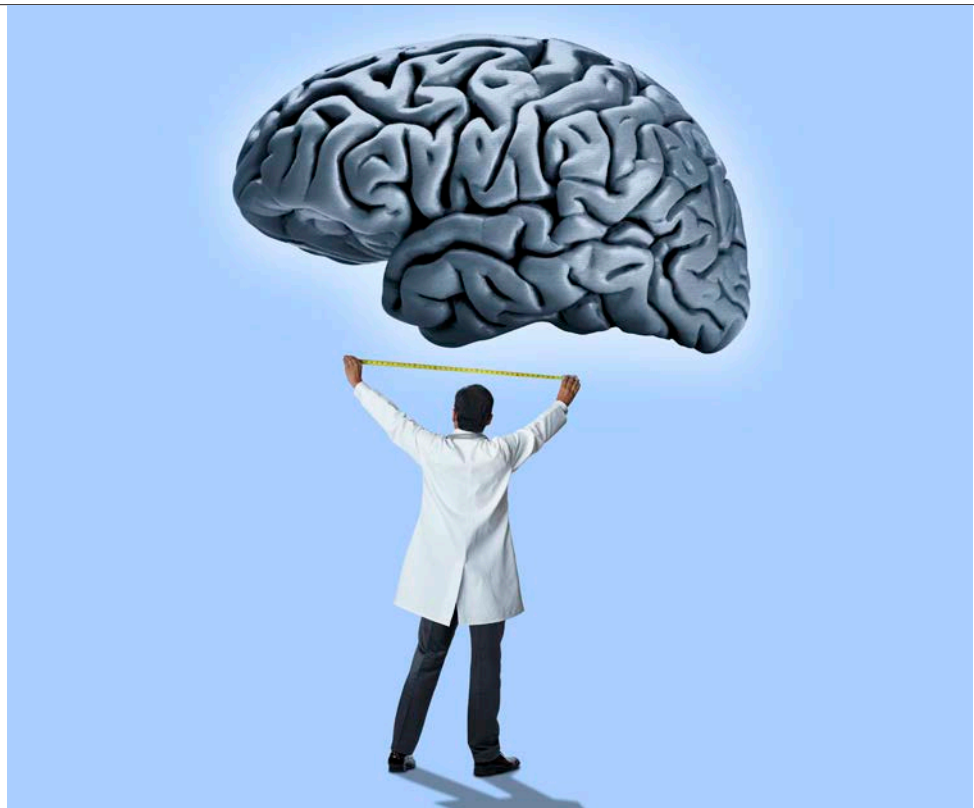
exposure to harmful content (64%) and online bullying (53%). Despite those concerns, about half of parents said the internet improved connectedness among immediate (47%) and extended families (56%). However, 22% of parents expressed specific concerns about internet addiction in their children, with social media followed by online gaming representing the highest risks. When asked to compare worries about their child developing an internet addiction and a substance addiction, twice as many parents reported being more worried about internet addiction. About half of parents thought that the government and service providers should be more involved with regulating internet content.

DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.39851

MY BRAIN'S, LIKE, TOTALLY MATURE NOW

When do young people begin to think like adults? Between the ages of 18 and 20, suggests a study in *Nature Communications*. Researchers compiled results from four studies comprising the performance of 10,766 individuals in the United States ages 8 to 35 on 23 different measures of executive function. Performance on almost all the tasks improved with age, with the biggest improvements occurring between early to middle adolescence (10 to 15 years) and smaller but still significant improvements from middle to late adolescence (15 to 18 years). Performance on all measures stabilized to adult levels between 18 and 20 years old.

DOI: 10.1038/s41467-023-42540-8



WOMEN SHARE NEWS, MEN SHARE GOOD NEWS

Research in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* indicates that men are less eager and less likely to share negative information about themselves than women are, while there is little difference when it comes to positive news. In the first of three studies with 195 participants in the United States, researchers found that men were less likely than women to recall a situation in which they were dying to share information about themselves with another person. In the two other studies with a total of 952 participants, men reported being less eager to disclose information across a wide range of experiences, such as having an important discussion with a supervisor and receiving news from a doctor. Across all

Young people begin to think like adults between the ages of 18 and 20.

three studies, male participants were less eager and less likely to disclose negative information compared with women, whereas no gender differences were observed for the disclosure of positive information.

DOI: 10.1016/j.jesp.2023.104525

ENGAGE YOUR MIND

According to research in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, mentally passive sedentary activities such as watching TV increase the risk of developing depression, while mentally active sedentary behaviors like sitting at work do not. Researchers analyzed data from 4,607 participants born in the United Kingdom in 1958. At age 44, participants reported time spent watching TV and sitting at a desk during work or driving. The researcher also measured

participants' waist circumference, blood glucose levels, and an indicator of inflammation called C-reactive protein. Depression diagnosis was self-reported at ages 44, 46, 50, and 55. The researchers found that mentally passive sedentary behavior was associated with a 43% higher risk of depression, while mentally active sedentary behavior was not associated with a measurable risk of depression. Waist circumference and C-reactive protein (but not blood glucose) partly explained the association with depression, suggesting that activities like watching TV may increase depression risk by promoting obesity and inflammation.

DOI: 10.1016/j.jad.2023.07.053

SMASH THAT SNOOZE BUTTON

Hitting the snooze button has no adverse effects on cortisol awakening response, mood, or cognitive function, suggests research in the *Journal of Sleep Research*. In the first of two studies, researchers asked 1,732 individuals in Sweden about their waking habits. They found that 69% of respondents reported sometimes engaging in snoozing, the average duration of which was 22 minutes. Snoozers tended to be younger, more likely to be evening types, experience morning drowsiness, and get less sleep than non-snoozers. In the second study, 31 habitual snoozers spent two nights in a sleep lab. The researchers found that 30 minutes of snoozing improved or did not affect performance on cognitive tests directly upon rising compared with waking up abruptly with an alarm. Snoozing resulted in about 6 minutes of lost sleep, but it prevented awakening from slow-wave sleep, as measured with polysomnography. There were no apparent effects of snoozing on stress hormone levels, morning sleepiness, mood, or overnight sleep structure.

DOI: 10.1111/jsr.14054



Hitting the snooze button has no adverse effects on cortisol awakening response, mood, or cognitive function.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING INSTITUTE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

INCLUDES 2 CE CREDITS PER WEBINAR
FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 2024

Webinars that are part of this **live one-day** Institute will focus on the application of artificial intelligence and technology in psychology. The Institute will consist of four 120-minute live webinars, presented sequentially.

Bringing the Power of Artificial Intelligence to Your Clinical Practice: A Hands on Guide

Shiri Sadeh-Sharvit, PhD
9:00 am ET

The Future is Now: How Digital Interventions Could Address the Mental Health Crisis

Vaile Wright, PhD
11:30 am ET

Electroencephalographic (Brainwave) Analysis and Neurofeedback Improve Clinical Outcomes in Mental Health Disorders

Mary Tracy, PhD, MA, MFT, BCN, QEEG Diplomate
2:00 pm ET

Emotions and Technology: How, When and Where

Sharon Tettegah, PhD
4:30 pm ET

Visit [APA.CONTENT.ONLINE](https://www.apa.org/contentonline) to register

The American Psychological Association is recognized by the New York State Education Department's (NYSED) State Board for Psychology as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed psychologists #PSY-0100.



New Releases from APA Books

A Psychological Approach to Diagnosis

Using the ICD-11 as a Framework

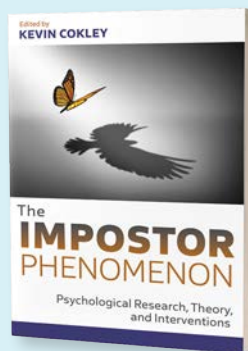
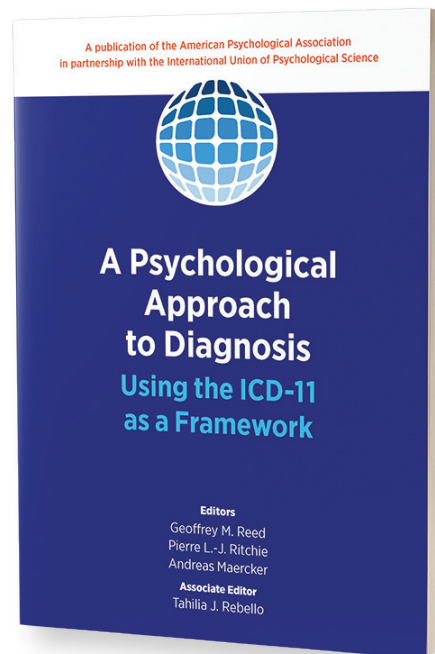
EDITED BY GEOFFREY M. REED, PIERRE L.-J. RITCHIE,
AND ANDREAS MAERCKER

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: TAHILIA REBELLO

FOREWORD BY: MICHAEL B. FIRST

This ground-breaking volume provides a detailed guide to clinical diagnosis by psychologists and other health professionals.

Paperback | 978-1-4338-3268-0
List: \$49.99 | APA Member: \$37.49



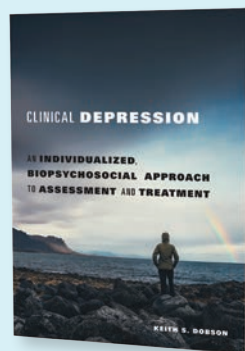
The Impostor Phenomenon

Psychological Research, Theory,
and Interventions

KEVIN COKLEY

This book offers a scientific investigation into the impostor phenomenon, a concept that has long been misunderstood in popular culture.

Paperback | 978-1-4338-4143-9
List: \$69.99 | APA Member: \$52.49



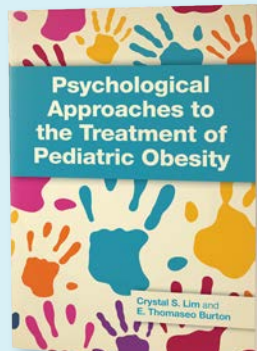
Clinical Depression

An Individualized, Biopsychosocial
Approach to Assessment and Treatment

KEITH S. DOBSON

This book offers integrative treatments for clinical depression based on the biopsychosocial model.

Paperback | 978-1-4338-3670-1
List: \$59.99 | APA Member: \$44.99



Psychological Approaches to the Treatment of Pediatric Obesity

CRYSTAL S. LIM
AND E. THOMASEO BURTON

This book incorporates case examples, treatment guidelines, and reproducible handouts to make addressing pediatric obesity more accessible to clinicians and practitioners.

Paperback | 978-1-4338-3892-7
List: \$59.99 | APA Member: \$44.99

Research

Datapoint

By Cory Page, Karen Stamm, PhD,
Meron Assefa, and
Alexander Khaddouma, PhD

NEWS ON PSYCHOLOGISTS' EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT FROM APA'S CENTER FOR WORKFORCE STUDIES

THE MOST AND LEAST COMMON SPECIALTY AREAS FOR LICENSED PSYCHOLOGISTS

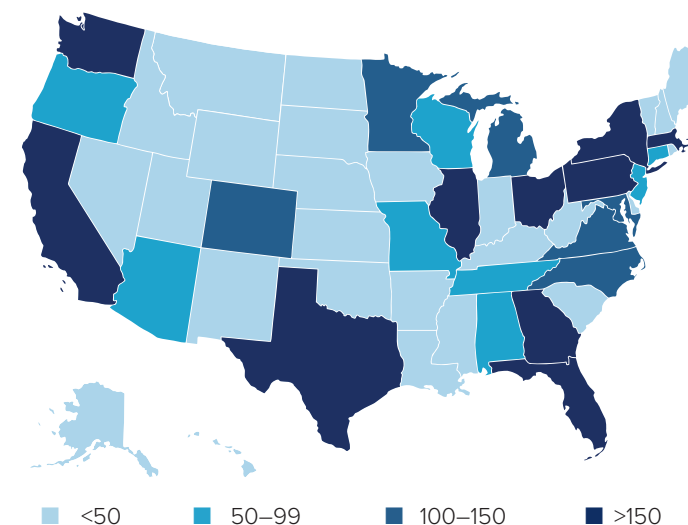
Clinical psychology is the top self-reported specialty, whereas clinical neuropsychology is the top ABPP certification

In 2023, approximately 4,400 licensed psychologists in the United States (4%) held at least one American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) board certification.¹ Psychologists were most commonly ABPP board certified in clinical neuropsychology (30%), clinical psychology (27%), and clinical child and adolescent psychology (7%).

According to a 2021 APA survey, the most common self-reported primary areas of specialty among licensed psychologists were clinical psychology (44%), clinical child and adolescent psychology (11%). Behavioral and cognitive is the third most common specialty (10%) and counseling is 10%.²

Number of Board Certified Psychologists by State

The geographic distribution of board-certified psychologists across states is similar to the distribution of all licensed psychologists.³ California (427), New York (295), Florida (279), Texas (258), and Ohio (181) had the largest numbers of board-certified psychologists in 2023.⁴ California, New York, Florida, and Texas also had the four highest populations in 2023.⁵



1 American Board of Professional Psychology. (2023). *ABPP directory*. <https://www.abpp.org/Directory>. ABPP provides certification of doctoral-level licensed psychologists who demonstrate competence in various specialty areas. Retired psychologists were excluded. The authors acknowledge David Cox and Rob Davis for assistance with obtaining data. This report includes 15 specialty boards and one subspecialty board fully affiliated with ABPP in 2023, as well as two new boards in the process of affiliating with ABPP.

2 American Psychological Association. (2022). *2021 survey of health service psychologists* [Unpublished special analysis]. A self-reported specialty is separate from formal demonstration of competency in the specialty area. APA recognizes specialties via the Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Subsidiaries in Professional Psychology (CRSSPP). CRSSPP specialties may have different names from ABPP specialties. This report includes 17 specialties recognized by CRSSPP at the time of survey data collection (Spring 2021).

3 National Center for the Analysis of Healthcare Data. (2022). *Enhanced state licensure data* [Unpublished special analysis]. Only doctoral-level psychologists with active licenses were included.

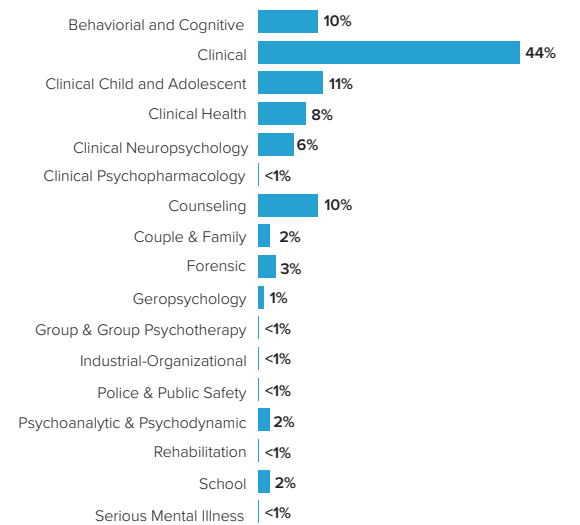
4 States were based on addresses listed as residence/office in the ABPP Directory.

5 U.S. Census. (2022, December). *Annual estimates of the resident population for the United States, regions, states, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2022* (NST-EST2022-OP).

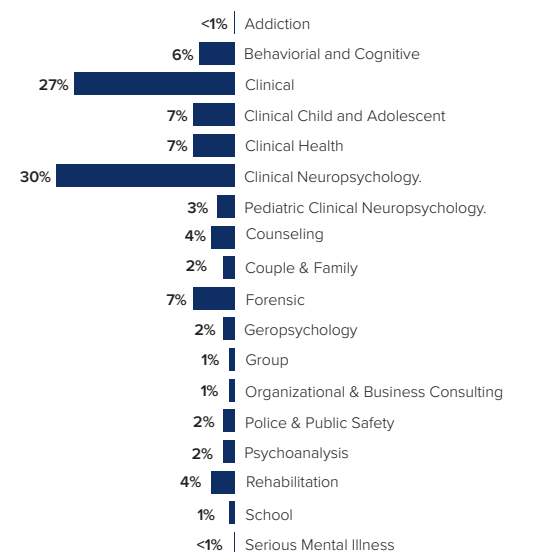
Want more information? See CWS's interactive data tools at www.apa.org/workforce/data-tools/index or contact cws@apa.org.

Specialty Areas

Self-reported Primary Specialty Area



ABPP Board-Certified Specialists



ROSALYNN CARTER’S LASTING IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

The former first lady never let up on her mission of better care, greater dignity, and reduced stigma for people with mental illness and their families

BY TORI DEANGELIS

Unlike many mental health advocates, Rosalynn Carter didn’t have a family member who struggled with mental illness. Instead, the former first lady, who died Nov. 19, 2023, at age 96, began learning about people’s challenges on the road, when her husband Jimmy Carter was campaigning to be Georgia governor in 1966 and 1970.

One of the people she met was a woman who worked the night shift at a cotton mill and then returned home to care for her daughter with a mental illness. The woman was exhausted

trying to manage both responsibilities, she told Carter. The woman’s story and others like it spoke deeply to Carter, propelling her to become a life-long champion for people with mental illness and their families. She did that through policy and educational efforts with the goals of reducing stigma, increasing public awareness, and creating better systems of care for people with mental illness and their families. These efforts were not just aspirational, they had serious clout: Carter testified and lobbied for progressive legislation

First Lady Rosalynn Carter (boarding a plane in 1978) worked tirelessly to promote mental health and expand access to care while in the White House and for decades after.

that later passed, including the Mental Health Systems Act of 1980 and the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008. She created influential, ongoing national organizations such as The Carter Center’s Mental Health Task Force and the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers. She wrote books on improving mental health care systems and supporting caregivers, and even launched an international fellowship to educate and support journalists covering mental health issues to do so with more depth, accuracy, and compassion (see sidebar for more).

Carter was a trailblazer in at least two key ways, said former APA president Nadine J. Kaslow, PhD, ABPP, who has served on the Mental Health Task Force since 2001 and worked closely with Carter on a regular basis. The first was placing the consumer front and center. “She really listened to people who had experiences with mental illness and to their top priorities for what would make a better mental health care system,” said Kaslow.

The second was her knowledge that real change takes time, particularly with a difficult issue like mental illness. “She understood that you had to be in there for the long haul, that you had to build bridges and coalitions,” said Kaslow.

Carter was also ahead of her time in recognizing caregiver needs, noted former APA president Carol Goodheart, PhD, who presented on a cancer expert panel convened by Carter and awarded Carter an APA Presidential Citation in 2010 for her decades of work to improve mental health services and support caregivers.

“She was a person who had genuine empathy and wanted to take action to help others,” Goodheart said.

Many other APA leaders have been part of Carter’s network of experts. These include, among others, former APA presidents Dorothy W. Cantor, PsyD, who served for many years on the Institute for Caregivers board; Susan H. McDaniel, PhD, ABPP, who gave a talk at a family caregiving seminar at The Carter Center that later became part of a book; and Jennifer F. Kelly, PhD, ABPP, who served on the board of Project Interconnections (now called 3 Keys), an Atlanta-based organization Carter helped organize that finds housing and services for people who are homeless and have serious mental illnesses.

While visiting The Carter Center in 2017 to award Carter another APA Presidential Citation, former APA president Antonio E. Puente, PhD, noticed the qualities that many say made Carter so effective.

“It was plain to see her simplicity, integrity, generosity, and gentleness as a human being, and the clarity and persistence in her vision for those affected by mental illness,” he said. ■



Former APA president Dr. Antonio E. Puente (left) and former APA president Dr. Nadine J. Kaslow (right) presented an APA Presidential Citation to former first lady Rosalynn Carter (center) in 2017.

HOW ROSALYNN CARTER MADE CHANGE

During her time in the White House and beyond, the former first lady spearheaded numerous legislative, policy, and advocacy efforts designed to promote mental health and eliminate stigma. Among them, she:

- 1979** Testified before Congress on behalf of the Mental Health Systems Act, which passed in 1980 and was set to provide major funding to community mental health centers. (Most of that funding was stripped away when President Ronald Reagan took office in 1980, and it didn’t return until the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010.)
- 1985** Initiated the Rosalynn Carter Symposium on Mental Health Policy, annual meetings held for 32 years, some of which resulted in books. The symposia convened representatives of major mental health organizations, including APA, as well as consumers, to investigate key topics such as mental illnesses and the elderly, financing mental health services and research, and stigma.
- 1987** Founded the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers, which promotes research, education, and training to help foster caregiver well-being and coping skills.
- 1991** Created and served as chair of The Carter Center’s Mental Health Task Force, which brought together influential individuals, including APA leaders, to identify policy initiatives and set the agenda for The Carter Center Mental Health Program and annual symposia.
- 1996** Created the prestigious Rosalynn Carter Fellowships for Mental Health Journalism, which has helped to train more than 250 journalists in how to use storytelling to reduce stigma and promote understanding of people with mental illness.
- 2008** Lobbied for the passage of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, which required insurance companies to cover mental illness on par with medical conditions.
- 2009–2010** Testified before Congress on behalf of the Affordable Care Act.
- Today** Influenced the creation of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, the establishment of new federal funding for research on mental illness, and the strengthening of the federal rule requiring insurance companies to pay for mental health care.



DIANA WALKER/GETTY IMAGES

COURTESY OF NADINE KASLOW

PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAMS PREP FOR STEEP DROP IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

Declining birth rate compounds problems especially for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and smaller institutions

BY ZARA ABRAMS

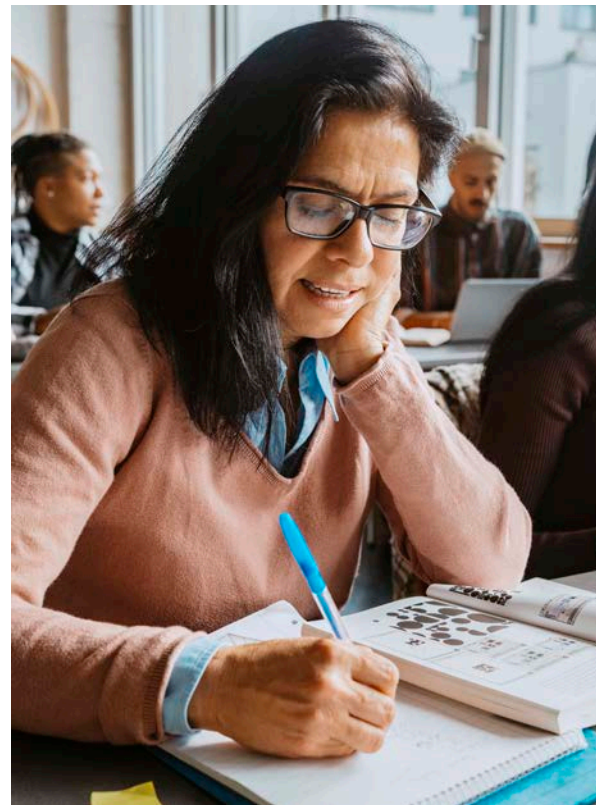
During the 2008 financial crisis, the birth rate plummeted. Nearly 18 years later, higher education is on the verge of feeling the impact. By some estimates, college enrollment will fall 15% by 2029 (“College Students Predicted to Fall by More Than 15% After the Year 2025,” The Hechinger Report, 2018). What is being called the “Great Cliff” is arriving, and psychologists are raising concerns: In the short term, fewer students and tuition dollars are already driving canceled classes, layoffs, funding cuts, and even mergers or closures of struggling schools. Over the long term, the drop-off could pose real threats to the field of psychology, harming the quality of education and training, psychological research, and patient care.

“We’re looking at a very serious crisis, and we’re going to see massive problems for psychology and related professions if we don’t get ahead of it and correct course,” said Melanie Wilcox, PhD, ABPP, a licensed psychologist, an assistant professor at Augusta University in Georgia,

and a member and former chair of APA’s Board of Educational Affairs (BEA), which has devised an action plan for addressing the enrollment crisis that includes better promotion of psychology’s value as well as career paths in the field. “It is very, very important that more people are aware of the details and complexity of this problem.”

The looming demographic cliff is one of several compounding issues threatening college enrollment, which declined sharply during the pandemic and has yet to recover (*Current Term Enrollment Estimates*, National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2023). Rising student loan debt, new alternatives to traditional degree programs, and other factors are causing many people to question whether a college degree is worth the cost.

Fortunately, there is still time to act. To preserve professional pathways in the field, it is crucial to show prospective students why psychology is critical for promoting health around the world and solving some of society’s biggest problems, to provide clear



guidance about career paths in the field, and to start attracting students well before college. At the systemic level, experts say increased advocacy is needed to make higher education more financially viable, including for nontraditional college students such as mid-career professionals returning to school.

“Relying solely on traditional college-age students is not going to work, because the raw number will inevitably decrease,” said psychologist Peggy Brady-Amoon, PhD, a BEA member and a professor in the Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy at Seton Hall University in New Jersey. “Yes, this is a challenge, but it also gives us an opportunity to rethink what we do and how we do it.”

Psychology can prepare for the looming enrollment cliff by strengthening pathways into the field for nontraditional students.

MASKOT/GETTY IMAGES

A DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT

The enrollment cliff is expected to strain some schools more than others. Prestigious and well-resourced institutions, such as Ivy League schools and those with large endowments, are likely to remain in high demand and stay financially secure.

But small regional private schools, public 4-year universities, and minority-serving institutions—including historically Black colleges and universities—may lose students who are courted by elite schools and suffer more from the loss of tuition dollars, said Jennifer Taylor, PhD, a former BEA chair and a senior director in APA’s Education Directorate.

Financial concerns about the value of a college degree are growing: More than half of Americans said college is not worth the investment in a 2023 *Wall Street Journal*–NORC poll. Pursuing a degree in a lower-paying field, such as social

More than half of Americans say college is NOT worth the investment.

2023 WALL STREET JOURNAL–NORC POLL

work or K–12 education, may become less attractive. Instead, students are trending toward professions that promise higher pay, Wilcox said, such as medicine and computer science.

KLAUS VEDFELT/GETTY IMAGES



“How do undergraduates view a bachelor’s degree in psychology? Students may not see a clear pathway into psychology as a profession unless they achieve a graduate degree,” said psychologist Susan Opatow, PhD, the 2023 BEA chair and a professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

Undergraduate psychology programs have a broad appeal, which can be seen as a positive, said Hideko Sera, PsyD, director of equity, inclusion, and belonging at Morehouse College, a historically Black men’s college in Atlanta, who introduced the Great Cliff discussions to the BEA in 2020. Such programs have traditionally welcomed and appealed to students pursuing a range of occupations, such as management, marketing, or other helping professions, ensuring that psychological insights are integrated into many fields.

“There’s a beauty in that approach, but it also means that not all undergraduate students go on to do psychological research, practice, advocacy, and consultation,” said Sera, who is also a member of the BEA. “Unlike traditional STEM or business fields, we have less of a built-in pathway to shepherd undergraduates along to graduate school and into the profession.”

Combined with other upheavals in higher education—including threats to academic freedom, the end of affirmative action, an exodus of faculty, rising student loan debt, and declining trust in science—the Great Cliff represents an existential threat to the field of psychology, Sera said.

“We’re staring down the barrel of a multifaceted problem that is not a temporary blip in the radar, but one that is worsening,” Wilcox said. “We can’t make more 18-year-olds, so what are the things we can control?”

Small regional private schools, public 4-year universities, and minority-serving institutions—including historically Black colleges and universities—may lose students who are courted by elite schools and suffer more from the loss of tuition dollars.

A PLAN FOR PSYCHOLOGY

Answering that question is a priority for the BEA, as well the Committee on Associate and Baccalaureate Education (CABE) and other groups at APA and beyond. Psychologists say it is critical for professionals across the field to help communicate to administrators, students, and the public about how psychological knowledge contributes to society.

“A lot of folks don’t realize how diverse and far-reaching psychology is, so one of our jobs as educators, writers, and teachers is to amplify that message,” said Brady-Amoon.

That can include calling attention to the mental health provider shortage, for one, and the risk that it will worsen if students do not pursue careers in psychology. It is also important to show how psychologists contribute to other current pressing issues in society, including helping families navigate social media use, supporting the ethical development of new technologies, and studying ways to reduce racism, ageism, and other forms of bias in a variety of settings.

Career education can start well before college. Resources such as the Smithsonian’s “I Am Psyched!” virtual exhibit, as well as videos and web content produced by APA’s Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools, can offer middle and high school students opportunities to learn about psychology as a career. Weaving career education into the early stages of undergraduate psychology courses is a way to help ensure that studying psychology is beneficial for students over both the short and

long term, and should be a priority, Opotow said.

“It needs to be much more obvious what the career routes are from psychology major to psychology jobs,” she said.

That can include short internships or opportunities to shadow a professional for an afternoon, but it should also involve sharing information about what jobs are available to bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral-level psychology degree holders and the costs associated with each path. According to APA’s Center for Workforce Studies (CWS), about 1.5 million U.S. workers hold a bachelor’s degree in psychology as their highest degree. They work in 88 out of 129 different occupation categories, with management, marketing, and social work among the most common roles.

Another way to show the utility of a degree in psychology is to emphasize the skills that psychology undergraduates develop during their course of study, said David Strohmets, PhD, chair and professor of psychology at the University of West Florida.

“Students aren’t just learning how to design a research study. They’re learning transferable skills like writing and problem-solving that are highly valued by employers,” he said.

APA’s *Skillful Psychology Student* guide describes abilities such as analytical thinking, oral and written communication, self-regulation, leadership, inclusivity, and technological know-how that can prepare students to succeed in a wide range of occupations.

“There are so many different jobs that knowledge of psychol-

ogy can inform and enhance,” Brady-Amoon said. “Let’s do some marketing and promotion to get the word out that a career in psychology is a good choice.”

SYSTEMIC CHANGES

While selling the benefits of a psychology degree can help departments bolster enrollment amid the impending demographic shift, broader change is needed in higher education in order for it to remain viable over the long term, Wilcox said.

Strengthening pathways into the field for community college students is a good place to start, said Sue Orsillo, PhD, APA’s senior director for psychology education and training. CWS data show that about 50% of psychology bachelor’s degree holders attended community college, with high attendance from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the field, including non-White and first-generation college students.

CABE and APA’s Education Directorate are providing teaching resources to educators at 2-year schools and to increase their engagement with APA. Other efforts seek to make it easier to transfer credit between 2- and 4-year institutions and to provide research opportunities for students at community colleges.

Four-year institutions can also retain students and even boost enrollment by providing better support for nontraditional students, including commuters, part-time students, and those returning to school after a hiatus. Already, a third of undergraduate students are ages 25 and over,

FURTHER READING

Reducing barriers for community college students majoring in psychology
Stringer, H.
Monitor on Psychology, 2022

A second demographic cliff adds to urgency for change
Schroeder, R.
Inside Higher Ed, 2021

The looming higher ed enrollment cliff
Kline, M.
College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, 2019

Building your career in psychology
Hammond, M. S., & Brady-Amoon, P.
Routledge, 2022

Knocking at the college door: Projections of high school graduates
Bransberger, P., et al.
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2020

HOW EVERY PSYCHOLOGIST CAN HELP PREPARE FOR THE GREAT CLIFF

1. Communicate with decision-makers about the value of psychology in today’s society.
2. Educate students of all ages about the range of career paths in psychology.
3. Emphasize the valuable skills and abilities taught in psychology bachelor’s degree programs.
4. Strengthen pathways into the field for students at community colleges, those looking for a career switch, and nontraditional students.
5. Advocate for financial reform in higher education, including student loan forgiveness and graduate student unions.

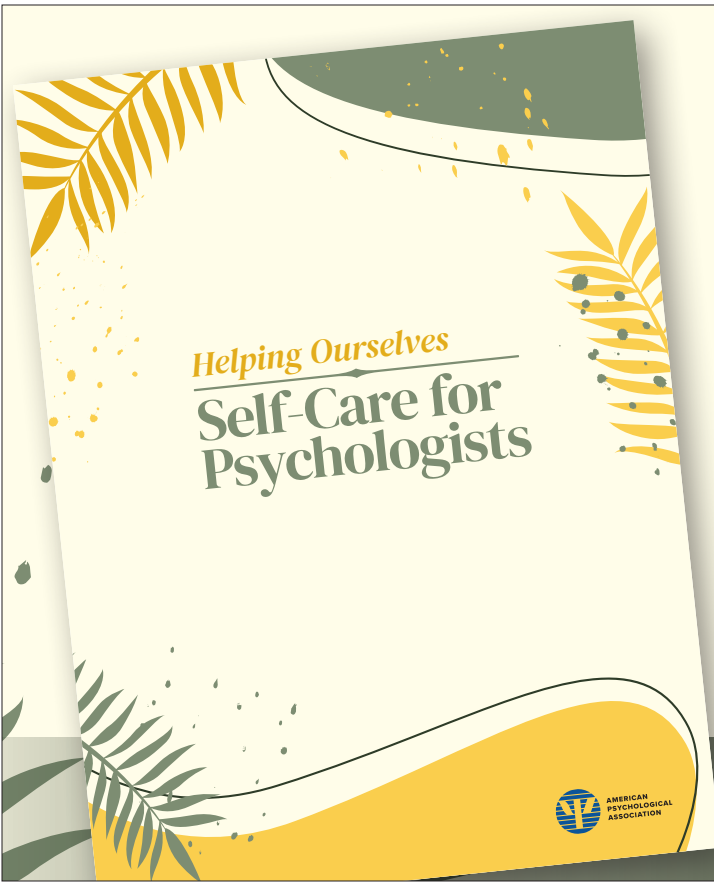
according to 2021 data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

Schools can better support these students by giving credit for nontraditional learning experiences (including work or internships), offering flexible options for studying (including hybrid courses and year-round degree programs), and facilitating what Brady-Amoon calls “easy on and offs” so that students can pause and resume schooling seamlessly as obligations shift.

Policy changes that make school more affordable are another way to lessen potential fallout from the Great Cliff. Within and across institutions, graduate student unions can

advocate for fair pay and benefits to make graduate degrees economically feasible for more students. At the state and federal levels, psychologists can advocate for student loan forgiveness and other financial reforms in higher education. Explore the APA Advocacy Office’s Psychologist’s Guide to Advocacy, learn about ways to get involved, and consider joining the Psychology Political Action Committee.

“There’s still an opportunity for us to be proactive rather than reactive about this,” Taylor said. “We can make an impact by engaging in those discussions now and using the strategies laid out by the BEA to push back on the demographic cliff.” ■



Helping Ourselves
Self-Care for Psychologists

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

This timely publication tackles common challenges psychologists face in creating and sustaining a healthy work-life balance, with tried-and-true tactics for getting back on course.

<https://pages.apa.org/self-care/>

U.S. MILITARY HIRING THOUSANDS OF PREVENTION EXPERTS

Amid a rising tide of sexual assaults, military leaders are taking a public health approach

BY ZARA ABRAMS

The U.S. military has launched an ambitious effort to hire and train more than 2,000 experts focused on preventing sexual assault and other harmful behaviors within its ranks. The move comes after an estimated 25% increase in military sexual assaults, which affected about 35,900 active duty service members in 2021, up from about 28,600 in 2018 (*2021 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Military Members*, Office of People Analytics, 2023).

“We had already seen an uptick in prevalence in 2018, and then once again, that number increased,” said Nathan Galbreath, PhD, acting director for the Department of Defense (DoD) Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO). “This was certainly concerning to us and also to the secretary of defense,” who launched an Independent Review Commission (IRC) on Sexual Assault in the Military within days of taking office.

After 90 days of interviews, observations, and data collection, the IRC released a report pinpointing problems in the military’s approach to sexual assault, including “a near total lack of prevention specialists.” The urgency of responding to reported assaults had left little bandwidth for prevention efforts, which generally

took the form of lecture-style meetings or well-meaning but unhelpful awareness campaigns such as pancake breakfasts and golf tournaments (*Hard Truths and the Duty to Change: Recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military*, 2021).

“We also found that a key driver of sexual assault, as well as other harmful behaviors, was the culture within a unit,” known as the command climate, said Andra Tharp, PhD, the senior prevention adviser for the DoD Office of Force Resiliency. “When command climate is unhealthy, these behaviors are more likely to take place.”

The new Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce (IPPW) is the military’s intended antidote—but culture shifts take time, especially for an organization with more than 2 million personnel. Through 2028, the IPPW will recruit, hire, and train more than 2,000 psychologists and other prevention experts to serve at hundreds of military locations and ships around the world. Prevention specialists will take a holistic approach to reducing risk factors and promoting protective factors against sexual assault, harassment, suicide, retaliation, and domestic and child abuse.

“This is a real opportunity for the Department of Defense

to continue to evolve prevention science as a leading force within military health,” especially as it pertains to suicide, said Rebecca K. Blais, PhD, an associate professor of psychology at Arizona State University, a licensed clinical psychologist, and a subject matter expert who has advised the Pentagon on sexual assault and suicide risk. “I’m optimistic that some of these new efforts can promote culture change.”

Through 2028, the IPPW will recruit, hire, and train more than 2,000 psychologists and other prevention experts to serve at hundreds of military locations and ships around the world.

HARD TRUTHS

The military measures the prevalence of sexual assault using two metrics: estimates that extrapolate from anonymous surveys and formal reports. Reports made to DoD officials make up between 20% and 30% of the total survey estimate of active duty personnel that experienced a past-year sexual assault. Formal reports reached an all-time high of 7,378 service member reports in 2022, the last year for which data were available (*Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the*



Military, Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database and DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, 2023).

“We’d actually like to see formal reports increase in the immediate future,” Galbreath said, which is part of why a culture shift that promotes help-seeking is so critical. “The more people coming forward, the more we’re able to assist them, but it also gives us the opportunity to hold offenders appropriately accountable.”

While women in the military face a higher risk of sexual assault than men, the risk for men is not insignificant. In 2021, 8.4% of active duty women (about 19,300 women) and 1.5% of active duty men (about 16,600 men)—nearly 36,000 service members

Service members and civilian employees attend a commencement ceremony for the U.S. Army’s annual observance of Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month at the Pentagon.

in total—reported experiencing unwanted sexual contact at least once in the year prior (*2021 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Military Members*, Office of People Analytics, 2023).

“There is a myth that men cannot be raped and when sexual assault occurs, it must be part of hazing,” Blais said. “It is both hazing and sexual assault. But most do not recognize it as such.”

Service members who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual also face a heightened risk—this group makes up 12% of active duty service members but accounted for 43% of all personnel who experienced sexual assaults in 2018 (*Sexual Assault of Sexual Minorities in the U.S. Military*, RAND Corporation, 2021). These individuals are at a higher

risk for distress and suicide following a sexual assault, Blais said.

Data also indicate that sexual assault in the military is closely tied to experiences of sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and workplace hostility. Among female service members who experienced sexual harassment, for example, the risk of experiencing sexual assault tripled between 2018 and 2021, (*2021 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Military Members*, Office of People Analytics, 2023). For men who were sexually harassed, risk of sexual assault increased by a factor of 10.

Those numbers suggested that existing prevention approaches were not working.

“Over time, our sexual assault prevention has focused on raising

awareness about the behavior,” Tharp said. “But being aware of an issue doesn’t really move the needle in terms of changing behavior so that those incidents are less likely to occur.”

In Blais’s work on military sexual assault and suicide prevention, service members described mandatory lecture-style presentations delivered to large groups that felt impersonal and even hypocritical at times.

“For a lot of people, particularly women, it felt like false advertising,” she said. “You’re telling me that sexual assault and harassment are not tolerated within the military, but within my everyday experiences, it seems like the norm.”

A HOLISTIC AND TAILORED APPROACH

Instead, research on best practices for prevention science indicates that workshops should be small, interactive, and tailored to the needs of specific groups (Gidycz, C. A., et al., *Military Psychology*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 2018).

The IPPW was conceived with that science foremost. It will take a more customized, locally driven view of prevention rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, Tharp said. Two units that report the same rates of sexual assault might be experiencing problems for very different reasons. For example, one unit with a younger demographic and high-stress climate might have a high number of alcohol-related sexual assaults; another unit with an older demographic might experience sexual assault tied to workplace harassment.

“On the face of it, those two installations would have the same kind of ‘problem’ with sexual assault,” Tharp said. “But the approach that you implement to get at the drivers of behavior at a given location might be somewhat different from another location.”

For example, a unit with many members between ages 18 and 25, an age range with high rates of impulsivity, might benefit from a training focused on emotion regulation and self-control. On the other hand, members of an installation in Minot, North Dakota, might need help managing the challenges of social isolation, Blais suggested.

But until now, the military lacked trained prevention personnel who could interpret data at the local level and dig deeper to help commanders tailor a prevention approach to fit their communities. That will change as prevention specialists begin to work one-on-one with commanders to devise action plans that address their individual needs.

The IPPW also plans to take a more holistic view of prevention, focusing not just on sexual assault but also on the risk and protective factors that relate to other forms of harassment and interpersonal violence, as well as suicide. Rather than focusing on a single harmful behavior (such as a workshop focused solely on suicide or an awareness event about sexual assault), prevention efforts will instead address risk or protective factors that underlie two or more behaviors at once.

That includes promoting healthy behaviors like problem-solving skills and

reducing things like daily stressors and social isolation. DoD experts hope this will make content more accessible and create a healthier military culture overall.

CHANGING BEHAVIOR AND CULTURE

The IPPW has a strict directive to focus on prevention and will not do clinical work, one-on-one counseling, or incident response. The goal is to clearly separate prevention from response.

WANT TO JOIN THE IPPW? HERE’S HOW

The IPPW is actively recruiting psychologists and other civilians with a background in public health or social science, as well as people with work experience related to preventing sexual assault, harassment, retaliation, suicide, and domestic and child abuse.

Roles span a variety of echelons, including:

- **Strategic:** Prevention directors, researchers, and policy analysts will help shape the objectives of various programs and organizations within the military.
- **Operational:** Program managers and supports will link a program’s strategic objectives with its tactical implementation.
- **Tactical:** Prevention leads, specialists, and supports will conduct activities on the ground, working closely with commanders and other military personnel.

After completing the IPPW’s credentialing program, prevention specialists will receive additional training depending on their role, including annual continuing education. The credential is transferrable, offering workforce members the ability to transfer to new roles and locations throughout their tenure with the military.

Learn more and apply for a job in the IPPW through prevention.mil and USAjobs.gov.

“In the past, even for individuals with a prevention skill set, their priority was always going to be on the individual who needed help in that moment,” Tharp said.

IPPW specialists will help service members develop healthy habits aimed at curtailing bad behavior before it starts, including social resistance skills to help promote responsible alcohol use, conflict management to improve communication within relationships, and mindfulness to bolster resilience. They will also advise on ways to reduce risk, such as limiting access to firearms and medications when a person is at a heightened risk for suicide and ensuring service members know how to access confidential chaplain counseling services.

Other prevention activities include support for military dependents, such as promoting home safety checks, helping service members develop healthy and nonviolent parenting skills, and providing financial literacy training. Preventing substance misuse will also be a big focus. For example, IPPW members may collaborate with partners in the community on responsible alcohol sales policies as a way to prevent overconsumption.

Central to nearly every goal of the IPPW is a military culture that encourages help-seeking without judgment or fear of retaliation. That will require a change in mindset among many of those higher in the ranks, Blais said.

“There’s been a huge shift in attitudes toward mental health care,” she said. “Today’s service members are largely open to seeking help, but they might have a commander who is 45 years

FURTHER READING

Hard truths and the duty to change: Recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military
Department of Defense, 2021

Prevention plan of action 2.0, 2022–2024
Department of Defense, 2022

old (average age for active duty is 28.2) and ‘grew up’ in a different generation of the military, where seeking mental health care was heavily stigmatized.”

For that reason, it’s critical to hire prevention specialists with expertise in attitude and behavior change, Tharp said—and to train them on how to communicate effectively with military leaders. The DoD has developed a credentialing program for the IPPW that will start a structured onboarding program focused on the principles of prevention, social determinants of health, and how to deliver information effectively to a military community. Workforce members will complete additional trainings as needed depending on their placements (for instance, specialized instruction with the National Guard or Air Force), including 20 to 30 hours of continuing education each year based on their credential level.

“We need our people to stay on the cutting edge of the science, and we know that prevention science evolves pretty quickly,” Tharp said.

THE PATH TO PREVENTION

Opportunities in the IPPW will range from on-the-ground work with commanders and service members to roles focused on prevention strategy and policy development. Translating existing research on preventing sexual assault and other harmful behaviors for the military will be another key focus of the workforce.

“There are not a ton of evidence-based approaches that were specifically developed for the

military community, so translating that science is a big piece of what our prevention workforce will be doing,” Tharp said.

Hiring is already underway and will extend through 2028. To ensure the IPPW stays on track and reaches its goals of reducing sexual assault, suicide, harassment, retaliation, and domestic and child abuse, the military has commissioned an external review of the new program by the RAND Corporation.

“Given that this is a huge investment and absolutely foundational to the goals of the DoD, we know we have to get it right and learn along the way,” Tharp said. “In addition to our internal monitoring, we thought it was critical to also have an external look to help us continue to improve.”

RAND will assess whether the IPPW is recruiting and hiring personnel who are a good fit for the program, whether new hires complete training and achieve competency, if workforce members are viewed as valuable by leadership at their various locations, and whether prevention specialists are using data to advise leaders in an effective way. Ultimately the department’s evaluation efforts will determine whether changes in command climate, risk and protective factors, and harmful behaviors occur.

“This is really our way forward for the future,” Galbreath said. “We’re getting people out there into our military communities—not just to provide care and assistance but to really understand and address the roots of the problem of sexual assault.” ■

Explore your student loan options with an expert guide.

Monthly student loan payments are back. Understand all your repayment and forgiveness options with an expert guidance. Schedule a **free 30-minute consultation** with one of our student loan specialists at GradFin.

APA Member Benefit

APA members get a **\$50 discount** on a GradFin Membership.¹



A GradFin student loan consultation will help you:

Apply for IDR

Understand your income-driven repayment (IDR) and forgiveness options.

Navigate PSLF

See if you qualify and help you stay on track for public service loan forgiveness (PSLF).²

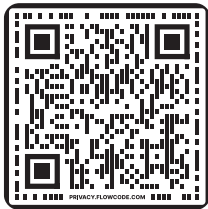
Explore Refinancing

Compare simple refinancing options that could help you save on student loans.

Stay the Course

If you're already in the right repayment program, GradFin helps you stay on track.

Schedule your free 30-min student loan consultation
laurelroad.com/APA



All credit products are subject to approval.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Please note that if you refinance qualifying federal student loans with Laurel Road, you may no longer be eligible for certain federal benefits or programs and waive your right to future benefits or programs offered on those loans. Examples of benefits or programs you may not receive include, but are not limited to, Public Service Loan Forgiveness, Income-driven Repayment plans, forbearance, or loan forgiveness. Please carefully consider your options when refinancing federal student loans and consult www.studentaid.gov for the most current information.

1. APA members get a \$50.00 discount on an annual program membership with GradFin ("Offer"). The discount will be applied on the current annual membership fee of \$249.00 and will automatically apply at checkout. This Offer is only available to current APA members, is non-transferable and cannot be applied to previous membership purchase(s). This Offer cannot be redeemed for cash or combined with other offers and is subject to cancellation at any time and without notice.

2. To qualify for PSLF, you must be employed by a U.S. federal, state, local, or tribal government or not-for-profit organization (federal service includes U.S. military service); work full-time for that agency or organization; have Direct Loans (or consolidate other federal student loans into a Direct Loan); repay your loans under an income-driven repayment plan; and make 120 qualifying payments. For full program requirements, visit www.studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service.

Laurel Road and GradFin are brands of KeyBank N.A. All products offered by KeyBank N.A. © 2023 KeyCorp® All Rights Reserved. Laurel Road is a federally registered service mark of KeyCorp. 3 Corporate Drive, 4th Floor, Shelton, CT 06484, USA.

082023CREQ-8532

Conversation

5 QUESTIONS FOR KATHLEEN ETHIER

The social psychologist draws on psychological science to improve educational and social systems to better support mental health

BY RACHEL ADELSON

The word "systems" echoes through conversation with Kathleen Ethier, PhD, director of the Division of Adolescent and School Health in the National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The social psychologist discovered early that knowing how people make choices in the context of social systems, such as education, could help her to "make a difference in people's lives."

Nearing completion of her PhD in the 1990s, Ethier took a job at Yale University's School of Public Health. She spent the next 6 years leading applied research on how to prevent unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) like the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Ethier found the work so rewarding that she decided to stay in public health.

She joined the CDC in 1999 as a senior scientist in the Division of STD Prevention. Since then, she has served in a variety of leadership and management roles, most recently refocusing on young people's health.

What drew you, a social psychologist, to public health fairly early in your career?

When I studied at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, the social psychology PhD program had a strong health psychology component. At the same time, the emergence of HIV had a strong influence. Once I branched out at Yale into working on other aspects of health for women and adolescents, I learned that when it comes to health



behavior, it's essential to understand not only how we individually process the social world but also how social systems impact our behavior and our sense of well-being.

What about social psychology training is especially useful in public health?

In social psychology, we work hard to understand social systems and how humans interact with them. We can see in the news every day how social systems create the social determinants of health, which are influential factors such as income, education, gender, racism, social support, and access to health services. That helps us to think about how to change those systems.

Because there's a really strong scientific basis for this work, we can take on some issues that are not necessarily clear. For instance, you can't always do randomized controlled trials in social science the way you often can in medicine. There's messiness in how humans engage

with one another in a social system, but sometimes it's more important to understand the things you can't control.

For example, you could have two adolescents making the same individual decision to engage in sexual activity, but it would result in different outcomes based on differences like the local prevalence of STDs, the availability of condoms in their network, their education in using condoms, and even whether they have regular health care so they can be screened and prevented from infecting anyone else. And all those systemic factors don't have anything to do with the individual choices that they make.

As more is understood about the critical role played by the social determinants of health, how do you apply those insights in your work?

We have to understand the interplay among individual behavior choices and the educational and social systems. As we do that, we can develop more outside tools to improve outcomes and reduce risk for the individual choices that adolescents make, for example, to make sure that sexual health care is available to them. Again, as an example, changing STD rates broadly is not necessarily about any one person but about the geographic and health care environments in which people live.

Sometimes we use retrospective data to inform new approaches. For example, we analyzed data from Waves 1 and 4 of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, which follows 14,800 participants over time. In just one slice, we found that feeling connected to family and feeling connected to school

COURTESY OF THE CDC

Conversation

during adolescence appear to protect adult health across multiple outcomes related to mental health, violence, sexual behavior, and substance use. That means that increasing social “connect- edness” in the teen years has lasting potential to promote better health in adulthood.

Can you talk about how psychological science can make a measurable difference in population health?

We looked for ways to improve school inclusivity for LGBTQ+ students, such as setting up clubs with student associations and creating safe spaces, establishing policies to prohibit harassment, and training educators. All these things weren’t done for any one child but to change the system and make it more supportive for all.

I know I said that human behavior can be messy, but we were able to use statistical analysis to be specific, multilevel cross-sectional logistic regressions to look at the relationships between school-level policies and practices and student-level health outcomes by sexual identity while controlling for sex, grade, race and ethnicity, and schools already identified for worse student health. For health outcomes, we looked at key indicators of psychosocial health both before the interventions occurred and 2 years after the interventions were completed, using Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System survey data from more than 75,000 students.

We found that in large urban school districts, schools that set up these policies showed mental health improvements not only among the more vulnerable students but also among students who identified as straight. They reported better mental health and reduced suicidal thoughts and behaviors as well.

This study showed how understanding educational and health systems gives us ways to reduce inequities to fully support the health and well-being of all youth in those systems. We can’t reach every individual, but we can look for broadly safe and supportive approaches to help the most vulnerable youth, and that turns out to help everyone.

What’s your advice for mental health professionals who want to contribute to public or population health?

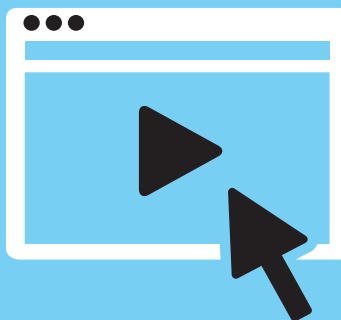
We have a workforce crisis, in terms of sheer numbers of trained professionals. Given the mental health crisis among young people, one of the most important choices for individuals going into the field is to consider what they can do to support young people in schools. School districts are struggling to fill positions even when they have funding.

As for researchers, the areas we need to work on as social scientists are developing preventive interventions, keeping problems from becoming crises, developing mental health literacy from very young ages, and helping schools put systems into place to address adverse events. We can always use more help in these areas. ■

350+ CE programs.

1-time fee.

Unlimited online learning.



Get 12 months of unlimited access to any of APA’s live webinar series, including special events, plus over 350 video on-demand CE programs for an unbelievably low price.

Learn more.

Save money.

Advance your career.

APA MEMBER: **\$379** | NONMEMBER: **\$649**

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY AT
APA.CONTENT.ONLINE**



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION



**CONTINUING
EDUCATION
IN PSYCHOLOGY**

Continuing Education
from your Association

American Psychological Association is recognized by the New York State Education Department's (NYSED) State Board for Psychology as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed psychologists #PSY-0100. Programs in our video on-demand catalog meet NYSED requirements unless otherwise specified.

INCONSISTENT REGULATION OF YOUTH-FOCUSED CHANGE EFFORTS

Rulings by different courts mean that sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts involving minors are allowed in some jurisdictions

BY MARC W. PEARCE, JD, PHD, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN, AND JESSICA K. PERROTTE, PHD, TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) change efforts, referred to colloquially as “conversion therapy,” arose during an era when diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions were considered by psychologists and many others to be illnesses that required treatment. Modern psychological research overwhelmingly shows that efforts to change sexual orientation and gender identity are ineffective and harmful. Studies show that individuals who undergo SOGI change efforts are more likely to report poor mental health, engage in hazardous health behaviors, and attempt suicide than those who do not undergo SOGI change efforts.

Research also finds that these and other adverse consequences are more pronounced when individuals experience change efforts during adolescence. In 2021, APA passed evidence-based resolutions critical of SOGI change efforts.

Some jurisdictions have determined that SOGI change efforts pose health risks to minors and have enacted laws to prohibit covered providers from engaging in practices intended to change minors’ sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. “Covered providers” typically include people licensed to provide professional counseling but exclude people working under the auspices of a religious organization. These laws also specifically allow counseling support for people undergoing gender transition. In contrast to SOGI change efforts, affirmative therapy adapted from evidence-based treatments such as cognitive behavioral therapy can be beneficial for helping LGBTQ individuals navigate stressors, including those stemming from internalized stigma, identity concealment, and rejection by close others. Recent research outlines a framework for integrating such evidence-based therapies into sexual and gender-affirming care.



AT ISSUE

Can licensed practitioners be prohibited from engaging in sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts with youths?

“Judicial Notebook” is a project of APA Div. 9 (Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues).

One such law, enacted in 2017 in Palm Beach County, Florida, was challenged by licensed therapists who argued that their services—which consisted of “talk therapy” that they claim helps patients reduce same-sex attraction—constituted speech protected under the First Amendment. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit agreed, holding that “the First Amendment does not allow communities to determine how their neighbors may be counseled about matters of sexual orientation” (*Otto v. City of Boca Raton*, Fl., 27 [2020]).

However, a similar law enacted in Washington state survived a challenge from a licensed therapist who argued that the state’s ban on SOGI change efforts violated his First Amendment rights to free speech and the free exercise of religion. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit held that the law fell “within the well-established tradition of constitutional regulations on the practice of medical treatments” (*Tingley v. Ferguson*, 65 [2022]).

The U.S. Supreme Court declined in December 2023 to hear an appeal of the 9th Circuit’s decision and resolve the split between the federal circuits (*Tingley v. Ferguson*, No. 22–942).

As a result, the availability of SOGI change efforts—and governments’ ability to limit their application to minors—will vary across U.S. jurisdictions. As of January, 22 states and the District of Columbia have banned conversion therapy for minors. Five additional states have partial bans. Indiana prohibits bans on conversion therapy, and the 11th Circuit’s decision prevents bans from being enacted in Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. The remaining 19 states have no statewide law that either bans or prohibits bans on conversion therapy, but some municipalities within those states have enacted local bans on conversion therapy. Thus, therapists who practice in this area must remain watchful for state and local rule developments. ■



CE

CONTINUING EDUCATION EFFECTIVE TREATMENT FOR AUTISTIC ADULTS

BY RACHEL FAIRBANK

For conditions such as anxiety, depression, and some other common conditions, therapeutic needs of autistic adults are not much different from those of anyone else. But many autistic adults report being turned away by practitioners. With minimal additional training and a willingness to learn, practitioners can include these patients in their caseloads.

CE credits: 1

Learning objectives: After reading this article, CE candidates will be able to:

1. Discuss psychological and societal challenges for autistic people upon reaching adulthood as well as for those diagnosed as adults.
2. Identify the basics of working with autistic patients and the importance of understanding their specific needs, instead of automatically referring them to often unavailable specialists.
3. Describe common strengths of autistic patients as well as skills for establishing trust with these patients.

For more information on earning CE credit for this article, go to www.apa.org/ed/ce/resources/ce-corner.

THE NEED FOR INFORMED PRACTITIONERS

Many autistic patients have reported that finding a practitioner who is willing to treat them for conditions such as anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder is often a hard task, as many will refer them to autism experts with long waiting lists rather than accept them as patients. This leads to a situation where many autistic patients are not receiving the help they need, or they end up receiving help from practitioners skilled in working with autism who are not specialized in treating their specific mental health concerns. “They’re missing out on cutting-edge, quality, evidence-based care,” said Vanessa Bal, PhD, an associate professor of psychology at Rutgers University in New Jersey, whose research focuses on life outcomes for autistic adults.

According to Bal, if an autistic person is seeking out help from a practitioner, one way to approach this scenario would be to ask the question: Is the referral one you would be equipped to handle if the person were not autistic? For example, if an autistic patient is struggling with the loss of a loved one and seeks out a grief expert, or an autistic patient is dealing with a specific phobia and seeks out an expert in treating phobias, these practitioners are likely more equipped to offer them effective treatment than they might get from an autism expert. “Don’t use autism as your automatic exclusion,” Bal said.

Valerie Gaus, PhD, a clinical psychologist in New York who specializes in working with autistic

patients, suggests approaching autism as one would explore any difference that shapes a patient’s worldview and social interactions. “You need to know how autism has affected them, so you can understand how it has impacted their view of the world, but you aren’t going to turn them away just because you didn’t know about that before,” said Gaus, author of the book *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder*. “It’s the same thing.”

MAJOR CHALLENGES FOR AUTISTIC ADULTS

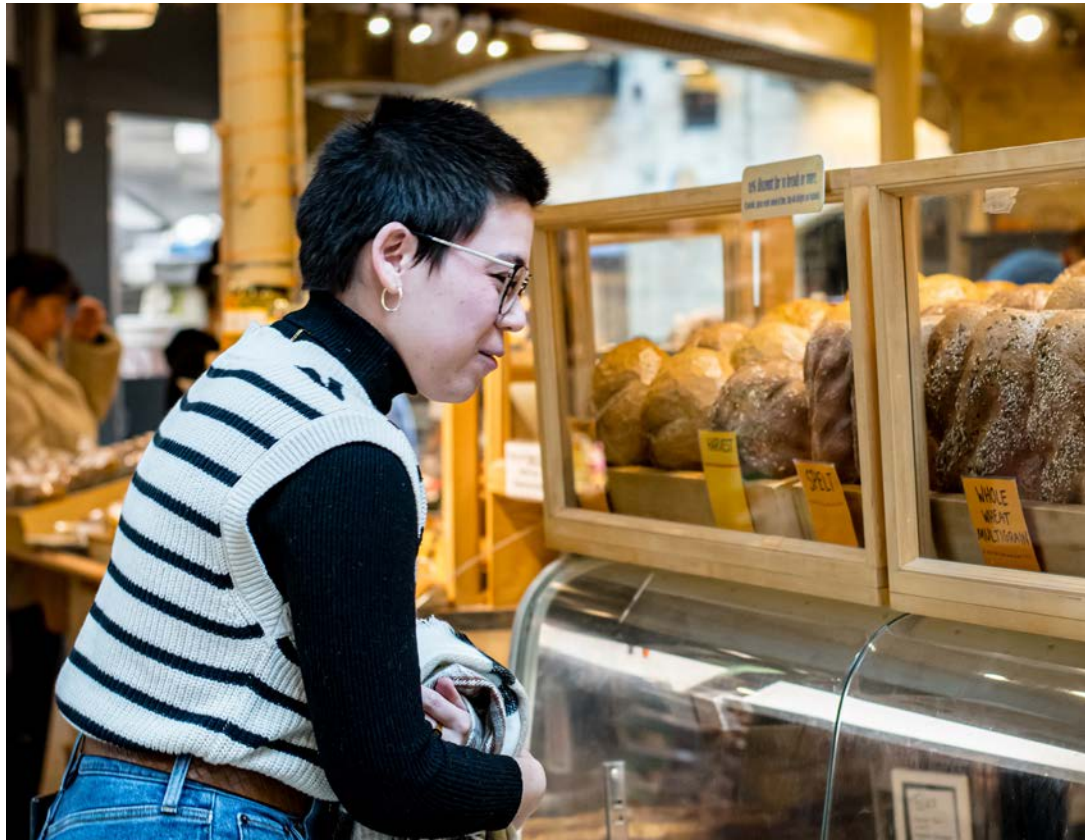
When autistic people reach adulthood, they often face a number of challenges in the transition, such as losing access to the support services available to autistic youth and learning to navigate a new world of adult norms, which can be overwhelming even for non-autistic young adults. Autistic young adults may struggle with deciphering unspoken social expectations in the work environment; having to adjust for sensory differences such as heightened sensitivities to light, noise, or scents; developing and maintaining friendships and romantic relationships; or dealing with the general stress of navigating neurotypical social norms.

As a result of these challenges, burnout is very common in autistic adults, as are co-occurring conditions such as anxiety and depression. Autistic adults have

a current and lifetime prevalence rate of 27% and 42% for anxiety and 23% and 37% for depression, which is thought to be due, in part, to the stresses of navigating a world that is not built for autistic people (Hollocks, M., et al., *Psychological Medicine*, Vol. 49, No. 4, 2019.) “A lot of this is due to pushing against your natural neurotype, to try and fit yourself into these roles that are expected of you, that leads to issues such as burnout,” said Melody Marin, PsyD, an autistic psychologist based in Austin, Texas, who specializes in treating autistic adults.

When treating autistic patients, it is important to factor in the ways that their autism has shaped their experiences and affected how they interact with the world, which includes accounting for stressors such as dealing with stigma and discrimination; the discomfort posed by sensory differences; the confusion of trying to figure out allistic, or non-autistic, social norms; along with the pressure of trying to “pass” as allistic, which often starts at a young age. “Getting to know the person you are serving is going to be really important,” said Paula Pompa-Craven, PsyD, a psychologist based in California who specializes in treating autistic teenagers and adults. “This includes considerations such as the underlying basis for specific behaviors, as well as their individual learning style, which can help build rapport.”

In Marin’s experience, the anxiety and depression that she sees in her autistic patients are often secondary to autism. As a result, many of them will hit a wall in therapy, where they have



Mindfulness techniques can promote relaxation for patients with autism who may experience sensory overload in certain situations and environments.

learned coping techniques but are still struggling. “You are still missing the underlying cause, which might be the pressure to conform or sensory overload or social expectations,” Marin said. She finds that it is important to identify and address these underlying factors to help them find more effective relief.

For autistic patients, social anxiety has an extra dimension to it because of their life experiences. “One of the core features of social anxiety disorder is an almost irrational fear of being judged or ridiculed. Most people who have social anxiety disorder haven’t experienced those things, but they’re afraid of them,” Gaus said. “Unlike the neurotypical social anxiety

patient, autistic patients really have had those things happen to them. It’s not irrational.” Instead, treating autistic patients for social anxiety disorder requires helping them understand the ways that autism has shaped their life experiences, including their social anxiety, while also finding ways of helping them navigate tough social situations in an empowering way.

THE DOUBLE EMPATHY PROBLEM

There is an emerging body of evidence to suggest that the communication difficulties found in autism are the result of differences in how autistic and allistic people communicate, with autistic people having the

added pressure of having to communicate with both autistic and non-autistic people. In other words, autistic people are most comfortable understanding and communicating with other autistic people but need to also successfully interact with allistic people. However, allistic people are most comfortable understanding and communicating with other allistic people and have no pressure to also understand and communicate with autistic people.

“It’s not that autistic people inherently lack empathy and understanding,” said Joel Schwartz, PsyD, a psychologist based in California who specializes in working with autistic adults. “They find understanding allistic people difficult, but allistic people also find autistic people difficult to understand.” In this way, the differences between autistic and allistic people can be thought of as a cultural difference, which includes different norms and expectations.

As a number of studies suggest, there are distinct communication differences between autistic and allistic people, with a breakdown in understanding resulting between the two. This includes the ability to accurately decipher facial expressions, identify a person’s mental state, communicate effectively, and build rapport (Brewer, R., et al., *Autism Research*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2016; Edey, R., et al., *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, Vol. 125, No. 7, 2016; Heasman and Gillespie, *Autism*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 2019; Crompton, C. J., et al., *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 11, 2020).

Some of the differences include the role that eye contact and body language play in communication and the added subtext contained in allistic communication. Practitioners can modify their communication styles for autistic patients by stating at the outset that they will be adjusting expectations for making eye

KEY POINTS

1
There is a glaring gap in support for autistic people when the services they relied on as children and teens suddenly evaporate when they reach adulthood.

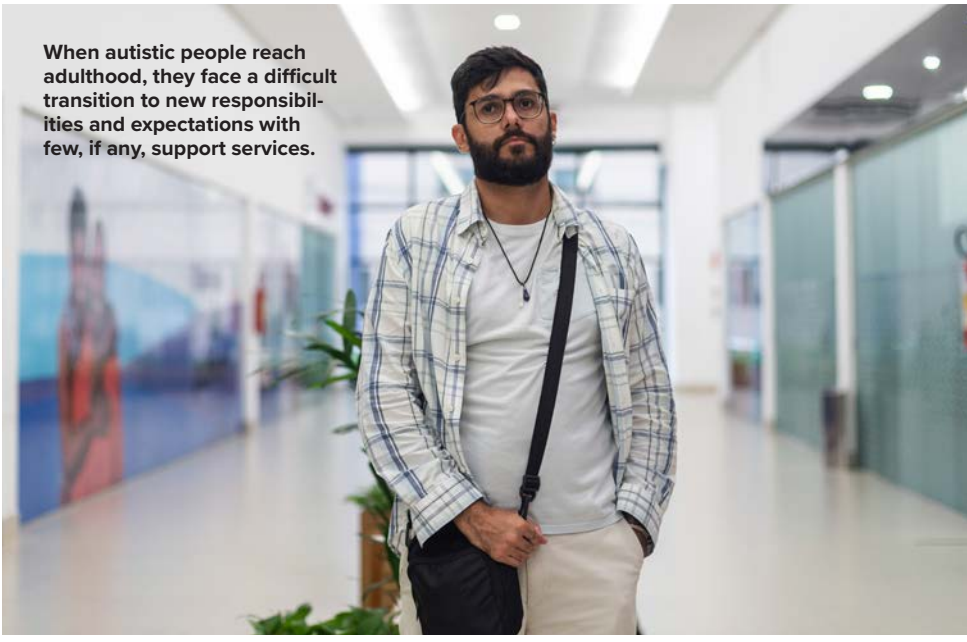
2
Practitioners are often tempted to refer autistic patients to specialists, but if equipped with an understanding of how their patients’ identity has shaped their experiences, they can adapt their practice to fit their patients’ needs.

3
Autistic patients from marginalized backgrounds may have additional challenges that require additional consideration.

contact. In addition, they should ask direct questions rather than rely on unspoken assumptions, and they should rephrase questions in different ways to facilitate understanding. Taking the time to learn and accommodate these differences can go a long way toward building rapport with a patient and tailoring therapy to fit their needs.

As Schwartz notes, another example of a difference is the role that special interests play in an autistic person’s life, which can often serve as a framework for forming their identity while also providing an outlet for them to seek connection with others. “Identity for allistic people tends to be more social; it tends to be based on belonging to some kind of group,” Schwartz said. In contrast, “oftentimes the primary identity for autistic people can be based on what their special interest is, which can be the primary way in which they view themselves and connect to others.”

In Schwartz’s experience, exploring and connecting with these special interests can often be very therapeutic for his patients, as it helps them reconnect with who they are and rediscover some of their strengths and abilities, while also giving them an opportunity to find meaningful connection with others. It is also an aspect of their identity that may have been pathologized in the past when they were encouraged or forced to join teams and clubs instead of having individual hobbies. “The old way of thinking would be to expand their interests and make them mask that,” Schwartz said. “Then you have adults who are



When autistic people reach adulthood, they face a difficult transition to new responsibilities and expectations with few, if any, support services.

fundamentally disconnected from their passions and what really interests them. Oftentimes, the therapy is working on rediscovering what they are and using them to connect.”

DIFFERENCES AS STRENGTHS

One major issue facing many autistic people are sensory differences such as hypersensitivities to certain sounds, lights, or scents. Examples of sensory differences could include a heightened sensitivity to fluorescent lights, getting easily overwhelmed in noisy or crowded environments, developing headaches from certain fragrances, or feeling discomfort from certain fabric textures like wool or polyester. Adults who were diagnosed later in life may not even realize that they have these differences.

“Sensory overload can feel like anxiety,” said Karissa Burnett, PhD, an autistic clinical psychologist based in Boston. “Until a person has the permission to think that they even have sensory differences, they might not realize what it is.” Burnett was diagnosed with autism herself as an adult (Fairbank, R., *Monitor on Psychology*, November/December 2023).

For practitioners who are treating autistic patients, it can be especially helpful to ask about sensory issues at the beginning of treatment to create a welcoming therapeutic environment. For newly diagnosed adults, it can also help to screen for sensory differences and help them figure out ways of making their environment more accommodating to their needs, as doing so can help improve their overall quality of life.

Practitioners can consider incorporating mindfulness techniques into treatment plans to help promote relaxation when a patient is experiencing sensory overload. In addition, research has shown that mindfulness-based therapies have also been proven to be successful in reducing anxiety in patients with autism (Pagni, B. A., et al., *Mindfulness*, Vol. 14, 2023).

Besides treating sensory overload, it is important to also help autistic patients reframe their perspective so they recognize strengths rather than see only deficits. While heightened sensitivity to sound can sometimes be difficult, research shows that autistic people have greater auditory perceptual capacity than non-autistic people, resulting in, for example, superior pitch detection (Remington, A., & Fairnie, J., *Cognition*, Vol. 166, 2017). Therapy can help identify and build on other abilities common to autism, such as a strong sense of justice and fairness; the ability to do the right thing, even in the face of social pressure; an increased capacity for feeling emotions such as joy and wonder; a strong attention to detail and patterns; and highly developed interests and deep expertise in specific subject matter.

RELIEVING PRESSURE TO MASK

Masking, which is sometimes called social camouflaging, is when autistic people adopt specific behaviors to “pass” as non-autistic. In a world where autism is heavily stigmatized, masking tends to start at a young age. “In many ways, masking

FURTHER READING

Barriers to healthcare and a ‘triple empathy problem’ may lead to adverse outcomes for autistic adults: A qualitative study
Shaw, S. C., et al.
Autism, 2023

Mental health challenges faced by autistic people
Lai, M. C.
Nature Human Behaviour, 2023

The neurodivergent friendly workbook of DBT skills
Wise, S. J.
Lived Experience Educator, 2022

A conceptual analysis of autistic masking: Understanding the narrative of stigma and the illusion of choice
Pearson, A., & Rose K.
Autism in Adulthood, 2021

Extending the minority stress model to understand mental health problems experienced by the autistic population
Botha, M., & Frost, D. M.
Society and Mental Health, 2020



It is important to also help autistic patients reframe their perspective so they recognize strengths rather than see only deficits.

is a trauma response,” Burnett said. Masking is often a survival mechanism that evolves over time in response to the criticisms of others, whether it is being punished for stimming behaviors, being scolded for asking too many questions, or being mocked for not knowing certain social expectations.

Although masking can help autistic people navigate a world where autism is stigmatized, it comes at a cost, with studies

showing that it is associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and burnout (Hull L., et al., *Molecular Autism*, Vol. 12, No. 13, 2021; Arnold, S. R. C., et al., *Autism*, Vol. 27, No. 7, 2023). “It’s tricky, because in a lot of ways, masking protects people and keeps people safe, especially if they have multiple marginalized identities,” Marin said. “It’s adaptive. It’s a person trying to adapt to their environment and stay safe.” In her practice,

Marin will often explore with her patients what it might look like to unmask in a safe environment by exploring moments during their childhood when they began modifying their behavior because of criticism from others. She also helps them honor the role that masking played in their survival.

ADJUST FOR DIFFERENT THINKING STYLES

One of the primary differences between autistic and allistic

people are their thinking styles. For many autistic people, their cognitive processing style tends to be very bottom-up, where they are constructing their knowledge one block at a time. “Every new situation is almost novel, and instead of having these top-down processes, which fill in the blanks, it’s almost like they are building up the information from the get-go, with each new situation,” said Joel Schwartz. This can lead to a lot of questions about each new situation, which is often misinterpreted as a challenge to authority or criticized as overthinking.

In contrast, allistic people tend to employ more top-down processing, where they extrapolate from previous experiences to predict what new situations might look like. “There are so many cognitive shortcuts that allistic brains make, which makes their processing and ability to process information much quicker, but it’s also full of errors and full of biases,” Schwartz said. Bottom-up processing often takes a lot longer and won’t always produce answers when compared with top-down processing, but it can be more accurate. Both ways of thinking have their strengths.

Although it can feel daunting to start treating autistic patients, it is an endeavor that, when approached with a sense of humility and a desire for understanding, can be effective and rewarding. “Even just the experience of sitting with a person who wants to really understand and validate their true experience, that is a big deal,” Burnett said. “That is corrective, that is healing.” ■

STEPPING UP EFFORTS to Reduce Conflict and Violence

Leveraging psychology to aid a war-torn world

BY ASHLEY ABRAMSON



Psychologists have long applied their conflict-resolution skills in mediating large-scale disputes. With the violence and war that remain rampant in some parts of the world, psychological science can help us better understand why these conflicts happen, inform how best to rebuild communities and nations, and aid in preventing future violence.



Some psychologists develop theories about the roots of conflict and how to resolve it. For example, Fathali Moghaddam, PhD, a professor of psychology and director of the conflict resolution program at Georgetown University, created omniculturalism theory, which suggests that emphasizing commonalities between conflicting groups is an important part of promoting peace.

Yet in a world fractured by violence, Moghaddam believes research is only one part of the equation. Science also needs to be applied, which is why it's so important for psychologists to disseminate their findings to key stakeholders—such as political leaders—and to collaborate across different fields in the application of psychological research.

One group working to advance peace are practitioners focused on peace psychology, which uses psychological science to develop theories and practices to prevent and mitigate direct and structural violence. Members of APA's Div. 48 (Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict and Violence: Peace Psychology Division) work to advance peace psychology by publishing a professional journal, funding peace-related projects, and supporting peace education in K–12, college, and graduate settings.

Recognizing the vital need for evidence-based solutions, a few psychologists both conduct research and apply their findings in conflict-ridden areas. Eran Halperin, PhD, a professor of psychology and founder of the aChord Center at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, studies

how to promote mindset change that promotes peaceful relations in the conflict among Israeli Jews and Arab Palestinians. He also oversees a nongovernmental organization dedicated to research application. “I can publish more and more papers, but we have to create a bridge from the science to the real world,” he said.

Around the world, psychologists continue finding new ways to apply their expertise.

BREEDING EMPATHY

In active war zones like Israel and Palestine, directly addressing long-standing conflict between groups can be logistically difficult and at times, unsafe. Halperin's lab focuses on identifying indirect ways to address people's mindsets about conflict with the hope of creating more empathy between groups. His findings suggest many people believe empathy is a limited resource and that they won't have enough empathy for their own group if they extend it toward other groups, which can exacerbate intergroup conflict.

In a recent project at a Jerusalem art festival, Halperin's lab created and implemented interactive performance art that communicated empathy as an unlimited resource. Ultimately, they found promoting the idea of unlimited empathy led people to experience more empathy toward out-group members (those not part of the participant's social group) (Hasson, Y., et al., *Nature Communications*, Vol. 13, 2022).

At the festival, the study started with some participants meeting an actor who described empathy as an unlimited resource. Then, all participants

met individually with two different actors, one who was Arab and one who was Jewish. Each actor shared a sad personal story. Participants who had heard the first actor with the “empathy is unlimited” message empathized with the suffering of the second actor, regardless of whether they shared the same culture. Many even elected to hug or shake hands with out-group actors who shared sad personal stories.

Through projects like these, Halperin hopes to impact people's mindsets about out-groups so, over time, their behavior toward the “other” can change, too. “Our goal is to change people's views about the conflict or out-group through interventions that induce hope and make them believe change is possible, and the conflict can be resolved,” he said.

EMPOWERING YOUTH

Young people have historically played a critical role in opposing injustice, from protesting police brutality to helping bring down dictators. Laura Taylor, PhD, an associate professor of psychology at University College Dublin and editor of *Peace and Conflict: The Journal of Peace Psychology*, studies how to motivate youth toward effective social change.

One method involves teaching children perspective-taking. In a 2020 study, Taylor created a storybook vignette to promote empathy toward refugees among children as young as 6 years old. In one condition, the children were told to pay attention to what happened in the story. In the other condition, researchers told the children to notice how the main character—a Syrian

refugee—was feeling. Children in the second condition were found more likely to help refugees (*Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2020). “The research suggests if we can promote empathy and perspective-taking, children as young as 6 would be more likely to help a newcomer coming to their school,” said Taylor.

Igniting the spark of allyship in young people could motivate new norms and help disrupt cycles of violence. As many conflicts are generational and occur in cycles, developing empathy among groups is one way to start to change long-standing patterns of violence. Perspective-taking can also motivate youth to be involved and effective in social movements.

Research suggests protests and demonstrations are more effective when they have a higher percentage of young people involved (specifically, in leadership positions) (Dahlum, S., *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 2, 2019). Reasons may include their propensity to spread information through social media and fewer family and professional obligations demanding their time.

For example, a student movement called Otpor in the former Yugoslavia successfully used public art to create resistance against the dictator Slobodan Milosevic, who was eventually defeated in the Sept. 24, 2000, election.

“Too often the attention goes to elites without recognizing the role of young people in social

Young people have historically played a critical role in opposing injustice. Research suggests that teaching youth perspective-taking can help motivate them to join social movements.



change, because they're the ones who are voting and will be living with generational conflict for the long run," said Taylor. "We need to understand what motivates young people to get engaged and what makes them effective."

APPLYING NEUROSCIENCE

The desire for power alone may sometimes motivate violence. But conflict also arises when people or groups sense their core human needs—such as belonging, safety, or resources—are in jeopardy. "Many fights start because people or groups feel left out, or that they're not getting their share of land or wealth," said Mari Fitzduff, PhD, a professor emerita of psychology at Brandeis University.

For example, she said Putin's actions may stem from feeling that his concerns about EU and NATO expansions were being ignored, and extremists may behave violently because they feel that their often-legitimate needs are being unheeded. In addition, such violence is often sustained because individuals, and particularly young men, find the group bonding they achieve through violence addresses their need to belong. In the current Middle East conflict, both Israeli Jews and Palestinians feel their need for identity and security is at stake in the war.

These emotions lead to physiological processes that can help explain conflict—and help peacebuilders understand new ways to promote dialogue between groups, which can ultimately identify long-lasting solutions for a more peaceful society. In her book *Our Brains*

at War: The Neuroscience of Conflict and Peacebuilding, Fitzduff provides suggestions for mediators addressing intergroup conflict.

For example, researchers have found administering intranasal oxytocin can promote bonding and cooperation, and reduces xenophobic out-group rejection (Marsh, N., et al., *PNAS*, Vol. 114, No. 35, 2017). This finding suggests that when people feel less threatened and more connected, they may be more likely to work together. This is especially true when people perceive other group members as part of their own group, which means it's important to forge humanizing connections that allow for empathy between groups.

According to Fitzduff, mediators of difficult conversations can promote oxytocin-rich environments by setting up the mediation room in a way that doesn't encourage groups to sit totally separately from one another. For example, providing informal gathering spaces, like a common hallway with coffee and snacks, or arranging experiences that can create oxytocin bonding through natural and relaxed conversations, such as sporting or cultural leisure activities.

TRAINING TEACHERS

In societies affected by identity-based conflicts, including war zones, teachers are tasked with addressing topics such as injustice, unequal distribution of power and resources, and misrecognition of diversity in society and diversity—without provoking future violence. Teachers' approach to curricula

in these situations can help shape students' perspectives about the roots and consequences of conflict and how they see and interact with other groups.

Understanding the crucial role education plays in helping to disrupt generational cycles of violence is a major focus of the work of Karina V. Korostelina, PhD, a professor of psychology and director of the Peace Lab on Reconciling Conflicts and Intergroup

TAKING ACTION

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

There are meaningful ways to contribute toward local and global peacebuilding even if you don't have a background in peace psychology or conflict resolution.

- **Pursue mediation training.** If you're interested in intergroup or interpersonal conflict, consider earning a certificate in mediation through an organization such as the International Mediation Institute or a local university.
- **Learn to lead dialogues.** Psychologists often have unique skills in promoting and facilitating dialogue, and, with additional training, psychologists can lead productive conversations among people with different viewpoints in their own communities. For example, Barbara Tint, PhD, a professor in the Conflict Resolution Program at Portland State University and at the University of Oregon Law School, runs dialogue training for those who want to build bridges across ideological divides.
- **Get involved with a peacebuilding nonprofit.** Many organizations, some run by psychologists, work toward international peace. Psychologists can lend their expertise by volunteering with nonprofits like the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism, Life After Hate, or Exit USA.

Divisions at the Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. Korostelina develops and implements peacebuilding training programs for history and social science teachers in conflict-ridden areas, focusing on humanizing enemies and reframing historical narratives of violence into narratives of peace, equity, and justice.

For example, in Ukraine, she's implemented psychology-based methods for teaching history that accurately address conflict and educates students about the importance of peace, justice, and reconciliation (*Peace and Conflict Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2023). While Ukraine has been at war with Russia since 2014,

Education plays a key role in helping to disrupt generational cycles of violence. Psychologists have created peace-building training programs for teachers that focus on humanizing enemies and reframing historical narratives of violence into narratives of peace, equity, and justice.

Korostelina's work has shown that Ukrainians maintain different views on the meaning of peace and how to achieve it. Her training equips teachers to be aware of their own biases so they don't incorporate them into lessons and to address disagreements through the lens of equity and respect.

Some of the activities she has developed teach students the difference between dialogue and debate, help them identify their preference for their own in-group and potential discrimination toward out-groups, and help them grasp the meaning of peace as not just the absence of violence but also the presence of justice for all people. "Teachers aren't usually trained to address conflict, and this is one way we

can disseminate psychological science so they can apply it in their lessons," she said.

LEVERAGING MEDIA

What people read, hear, and see on platforms from social media to major news outlets profoundly influences their perspectives and, eventually, their actions. Rezarta Bilali, PhD, an associate professor of psychology and social intervention at New York University Steinhardt, works with local and international organizations to apply psychological insights to help African countries mired in local and regional conflict.

She supports teams creating and broadcasting soap opera-like radio programs in the conflict-ridden areas. The



popular programs depict characters enmeshed in similar violent struggles using realistic skills to work through conflict. When viewers care about the characters depicted in the storylines, researchers hope they will similarly change their social norms, attitudes, and behaviors as they watch the characters work toward resolutions.

The dramas, penned by local script writers tell stories about villages in conflict, detailing the history of the violence, its resolution, and how people came together after it. Along with psychological research on role modeling, social learning, and perspective-taking, Bilali works with writers to incorporate mass communication principles about how to most effectively engage listeners with difficult aspects of conflict and violence in a way that promotes social norms and behavior such as tolerance of out-group members.

“The idea is that the characters take action to prevent violence or bring groups together for peace, and these characters often become role models for people,” said Bilali. “It’s through these role models and their actions that certain behaviors can start becoming a norm or seen as more socially desirable.”

Research on a radio program in Burkina Faso found that, compared with the control condition, those who listened to the soap opera reduced justification of violence and increased prioritization of addressing violent extremism (*Psychological Science*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 2022). Bilali has also found that role modeling positive actions can increase

people’s confidence that they can make changes in their own lives and communities.

REBUILDING POST-CONFLICT

Psychology can help prevent conflict and violence, but it also plays an important role in the rebuilding phase. Many psychologists facilitate processes through which societies move from a divided past to a shared future. These transitions include a search for truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees that the past will not repeat itself. “Addressing the root causes of conflict and changing structural barriers to justice is critical for social transformation and healing,” said Teri Murphy, PhD, associate director for peacebuilding research at the Mershon Center for International Security Studies at the Ohio State University. “We have to deal with the past, and at the same time, build a new vision for a shared future.”

Murphy’s transitional justice work has taken her to Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Colombia, and South Africa, where she has partnered with local leaders and organizations to help mediate conflict between groups, redress unjust systems in communities, and implement healing processes including restorative justice and memorialization.

Research suggests that contact between conflicting groups in post-violent settings can help reduce feelings of threat and build empathy by engaging directly with one another (*Psychological Science*, Vol. 16, No. 12, 2005). Study co-author

FURTHER READING

Contact-based programs to strengthen social cohesion in post-genocide Rwanda
Dehrone, T., et al.
In Nordstrom, A., & Goodfriend, W. (Eds.) *Innovative Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Around the World*, Routledge, 2021

Psychological intergroup interventions: Evidence-based approaches to improve intergroup relations
Halperin, E., et al. (Eds.) Routledge, 2023

The developmental peacebuilding model (DPM) of children’s prosocial behaviors in settings of intergroup conflict
Taylor, L. K.
Child Development Perspectives, 2020

Why our brains are at war—and what we can do about it
Fitzduff, M.
Medium, Sept. 27, 2021

Linda Tropp, PhD, a professor of psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, supports nongovernmental organizations in designing and implementing intergroup contact programs in areas recovering from war to prevent future outbreaks of violence.

Tropp explored the effects of intergroup contact in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where several different ethnic groups experience long-standing conflicts. One project involved a week-long “Peace Camp” in which ethnically diverse groups of youth learned how to analyze conflict and discuss challenging topics using nonviolent communication strategies. Participants’ cross-group relationships also grew through less structured activities, such as building a fire or working together on a farm. Scores on out-group trust, closeness, empathy, and willingness to interact with ethnic out-group members all significantly increased following the camp intervention (*Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2022).

“If you’re segregated from another community, you don’t have many humanizing experiences to rely on,” said Tropp. “When you start to engage with people across lines of difference, you start questioning your stereotypes. You see these are real people with experiences, thoughts, and feelings, which helps to promote empathy.”

CONNECTING REFUGEES

For refugees fleeing violence or other adverse circumstances, conflict can continue in their

new settings if left unaddressed. Many U.S. resettlement communities consist of refugees from multiple sides of a conflict, which can thwart efforts to help residents adjust to their new environment.

“People really need each other in this context, when they’re in a new country, don’t speak the language, and are often dealing with loss of status, racism, and social exclusion,” said Barbara Tint, PhD, a professor in the Conflict Resolution Program at Portland State University and at the University of Oregon Law School.

Intergroup dialogue is a method that aims to create safe and constructive processes for different groups, such as those with historical conflict, political polarization, or differing views on social and community issues. Partnering with a Portland-based refugee agency, Tint and her colleagues worked on a project called Diasporas in Dialogue in which they recruited

African refugees from groups historically in conflict, such as Rwandan Hutu and Tutsi community members. In a 10-session series, participants from all sides of the conflict shared their stories, experiences, strengths, and challenges with the goal of building relationships and community. Rather than creating solutions as in mediation, the dialogue focused on creating space for community conversations and understanding. “Through increased understanding, change and solutions can eventually develop,” said Tint.

Trust often grows slowly. Tint said some participants wouldn’t eat together right away because they knew people who died from being poisoned during the conflict. By the end of the series, members of both groups had overcome their reservations and wanted to continue these dialogues. Eventually, they became facilitators and ran a new series of groups on their own. Some participants formed

nonprofits together, such as a Rwandese women’s organization, to encourage connections and healing across the divide (*Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2014).

It’s easy to feel hopeless about the state of society and the world as conflict and war rage on even amid ongoing efforts toward change. Creating and applying long-lasting solutions is complex, yet many build on fundamental realities about humanity with which psychologists are uniquely familiar. “Our fundamental needs as humans are a significant link between psychology and conflict resolution,” said Tint. “Change requires adopting a more curious mindset and suspending our judgments about challenging situations so we can recognize that we’re all looking for safety, security, and belonging. Power and historical trauma need to be addressed, and if done well, groups can walk forward together in a different way.” ■

“Power and historical trauma need to be addressed, and if done well, groups can walk forward together in a different way.”

BARBARA TINT, PHD, PROFESSOR, CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM AT PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY



NEW APPROACHES TO YOUTH SUBSTANCE MISUSE

“Just Say No” didn’t work. Psychologists and other experts are finding new holistic ways to steer kids away—or at least keep them from dying—from illicit substances.

BY ZARA ABRAMS

For years, students in middle and high schools across the country were urged to “just say no” to drugs and alcohol. But it’s no secret that the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program, which was typically delivered by police officers who urged total abstinence, didn’t work. A meta-analysis found the program largely ineffective and one study even showed that kids who completed D.A.R.E. were more likely than their peers to take drugs (Ennett, S. T., et al., *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 84, No. 9, 1994; Rosenbaum, D. P., & Hanson, G. S., *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1998).

“We know that the ‘Just Say No’ campaign doesn’t work. It’s based in pure risks, and that doesn’t resonate with teens,” said developmental psychologist Bonnie Halpern-Felsher, PhD, a professor of pediatrics and founder and executive director of several substance use prevention and intervention curriculums at Stanford University. “There are real and perceived benefits to using drugs, as well as risks, such as coping with stress or liking the ‘high.’ If we only talk about the negatives, we lose our credibility.”

Partially because of the lessons learned from D.A.R.E., many communities are taking a different approach to addressing youth substance use. They’re also responding to very real changes in the drug landscape. Aside from vaping, adolescent use of illicit substances has dropped substantially over the past few decades, but more teens are overdosing

than ever—largely because of contamination of the drug supply with fentanyl, as well as the availability of stronger substances (“Most Reported Substance Use Among Adolescents Held Steady in 2022,” National Institute on Drug Abuse).

“The goal is to impress upon youth that far and away the healthiest choice is not to put these substances in your body, while at the same time acknowledging that some kids are still going to try them,” said Aaron Weiner, PhD, ABPP, a licensed addiction psychologist based in Lake Forest, Illinois, and immediate past-president of APA’s Div. 50 (Society of Addiction Psychology). “If that’s the case, we want to help them avoid the worst consequences.”

While that approach, which incorporates principles of harm reduction, is not universally accepted, evidence is growing for its ability to protect youth

In 2022, about 1 in 3 high school seniors, 1 in 5 sophomores, and 1 in 10 eighth graders reported using an illicit substance in the past year.

from accidental overdoses and other consequences of substance use, including addiction, justice involvement, and problems at school. Psychologists have been a key part of the effort to create, test, and administer developmentally appropriate, evidence-based programs that approach prevention in a holistic, nonstigmatizing way.

“Drugs cannot be this taboo thing that young people can’t ask about anymore,” said Nina Christie, PhD, a postdoctoral research fellow in the Center on Alcohol, Substance Use, and Addictions at the University of New Mexico. “That’s just a recipe for young people dying, and we can’t continue to allow that.”

CHANGES IN DRUG USE

In 2022, about 1 in 3 high school seniors, 1 in 5 sophomores, and 1 in 10 eighth graders reported using an illicit substance in the past year, according to the



A key tenet of modern prevention and treatment programs is empowering youth to make their own decisions around substance use in a developmentally appropriate way.

National Institute on Drug Abuse’s (NIDA) annual survey (*Monitoring the Future: National Survey Results on Drug Use, 1975–2022: Secondary School Students*, NIDA, 2023). Those numbers were down significantly from pre-pandemic levels and essentially at their lowest point in decades.

Substance use during adolescence is particularly dangerous because psychoactive substances, including nicotine, cannabis, and alcohol, can interfere with healthy brain development (Winters, K. C., & Arria, A., *Prevention Research*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2011). Young people who use substances early and frequently also face a higher risk of developing a substance use disorder in adulthood (McCabe, S. E., et al., *JAMA Network Open*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 2022). Kids who avoid regular substance use are more likely to succeed in school and to avoid problems with the

juvenile justice system (Public Policy Statement on Prevention, American Society of Addiction Medicine, 2023).

“The longer we can get kids to go without using substances regularly, the better their chances of having an optimal life trajectory,” Weiner said.

The drugs young people are using—and the way they’re using them—have also changed, and psychologists say this needs to inform educational efforts around substance use. Alcohol and cocaine are less popular than they were in the 1990s; use of cannabis and hallucinogens, which are now more salient and easier to obtain, were higher than ever among young adults in 2021 (“Marijuana and Hallucinogen Use Among Young Adults Reached All-Time High in 2021,” NIDA).

“Gen Z is drinking less alcohol than previous generations, but they seem to be increasingly

“THE GOAL IS to impress upon youth that far and away the healthiest choice is not to put these substances in your body, while at the same time acknowledging that some kids are still going to try them.”

AARON WEINER, PHD, ABPP, LICENSED ADDICTION PSYCHOLOGIST

interested in psychedelics and cannabis,” Christie said. “Those substances have kind of replaced alcohol as the cool thing to be doing.”

Young people are also seeing and sharing content about substance use on social media, with a rise in posts and influencers promoting vaping on TikTok and other platforms (Vassey, J., et al., *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, 2023). Research suggests that adolescents and young adults who see tobacco or nicotine content on social media are more likely to later start using it (Donaldson, S. I., et al., *JAMA Pediatrics*, Vol. 176, No. 9, 2022).

A MORE HOLISTIC VIEW

Concern for youth well-being is what drove the well-intentioned, but ultimately ineffective, “mad rush for abstinence,” as Robert Schwebel, PhD, calls it. Though that approach has been unsuccessful in many settings, a large number of communities still employ it, said Schwebel, a clinical psychologist who created the Seven Challenges Program for treating substance use in youth.

But increasingly, those working to prevent and treat youth substance use are taking a different approach—one that aligns with principles Schwebel helped popularize through Seven Challenges.

A key tenet of modern prevention and treatment programs is empowering youth to make their own decisions around substance use in a developmentally appropriate way. Adolescents are exploring their identities (including how they personally relate to drugs), learning how to

weigh the consequences of their actions, and preparing for adulthood, which involves making choices about their future. The Seven Challenges Program, for example, uses supportive journaling exercises, combined with counseling, to help young people practice informed decision-making around substance use with those processes in mind.

“You can insist until you’re blue in the face, but that’s not going to make people abstinent. They ultimately have to make their own decisions,” Schwebel said.

Today’s prevention efforts also tend to be more holistic than their predecessors, accounting for the ways drug use relates to other addictive behaviors, such as gaming and gambling, or risky choices, such as fighting, drag racing, and having unprotected sex. Risk factors for substance use—which include trauma, adverse childhood experiences, parental history of substance misuse, and personality factors such as impulsivity and sensation seeking—overlap with many of those behaviors, so it often makes sense to address them collectively.

“We’ve become more sophisticated in understanding the biopsychosocial determinants of alcohol and drug use and moving beyond this idea that it’s a disease and the only solution is medication,” said James Murphy, PhD, a professor of psychology at the University of Memphis who studies addictive behaviors and how to intervene.

Modern prevention programs also acknowledge that young people use substances to serve a

purpose—typically either social or emotional in nature—and if adults expect them not to use, they should help teens learn to fulfill those needs in a different way, Weiner said.

“Youth are generally using substances to gain friends, avoid losing them, or to cope with emotional problems that they’re having,” he said. “Effective prevention efforts need to offer healthy alternatives for achieving those goals.”

“DRUGS CANNOT BE this taboo thing that young people can’t ask about anymore. That’s just a recipe for young people dying, and we can’t continue to allow that.”

NINA CHRISTIE, PHD, POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW, CENTER ON ALCOHOL, SUBSTANCE USE, AND ADDICTIONS

JUST SAY ‘KNOW’

At times, the tenets of harm reduction and substance use prevention seem inherently misaligned. Harm reduction, born out of a response to the AIDS crisis, prioritizes bodily autonomy and meeting people where they are without judgment. For some harm reductionists, actively encouraging teens against using drugs could violate the principle of respecting autonomy, Weiner said.

On the other hand, traditional prevention advocates may feel that teaching adolescents how to use fentanyl test strips or encouraging them not to use drugs alone undermines the idea that they can

choose not to use substances. But Weiner says both approaches can be part of the solution.

“It doesn’t have to be either prevention or harm reduction, and we lose really important tools when we say it has to be one or the other,” he said.

In adults, harm reduction approaches save lives, prevent disease transmission, and help people connect with substance use treatment (Harm Reduction, NIDA, 2022). Early evidence shows similar interventions can help adolescents improve their knowledge and decision-making around drug use (Fischer, N. R., *Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy*, Vol. 17, 2022). Teens are enthusiastic about these programs, which experts often call “Just Say Know” to contrast them with

the traditional “Just Say No” approach. In one pilot study, 94% of students said a “Just Say Know?” program provided helpful information and 92% said it might influence their approach to substance use (Meredith, L. R., et al., *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 2021).

“Obviously, it’s the healthiest thing if we remove substance use from kids’ lives while their brains are developing. At the same time, my preference is that we do something that will have a positive impact on these kids’ health and behaviors,” said Nora Charles, PhD, an associate professor and head of the Youth Substance Use and Risky Behavior Lab at the University of Southern Mississippi. “If the way to do that is to encourage more

sensible and careful engagement with illicit substances, that is still better than not addressing the problem.”

One thing not to do is to overly normalize drug use or to imply that it is widespread, Weiner said. Data show that it’s not accurate to say that most teens have used drugs in the past year or that drugs are “just a part of high school life.” In fact, students tend to overestimate how many of their peers use substances (Dumas, T. M., et al., *Addictive Behaviors*, Vol. 90, 2019; Helms, S. W., et al., *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 50, No. 12, 2014).

A way to incorporate both harm reduction and traditional prevention is to customize solutions to the needs of various communities. For example,

Psychologists have been a key part of the effort to create, test, and administer developmentally appropriate, evidence-based programs that approach prevention in a holistic, non-stigmatizing way.



in 2022, five Alabama high school students overdosed on a substance laced with fentanyl, suggesting that harm reduction strategies could save lives in that community. Other schools with less reported substance use might benefit more from a primary prevention-style program.

At Stanford, Halpern-Felsher's Research and Education to Empower Adolescents and Young Adults to Choose Health (REACH) Lab has developed a series of free, evidence-based programs through community-based participatory research that can help populations with different needs. The REACH Lab offers activity-based prevention, intervention, and cessation programs for elementary, middle, and high school students, including curricula on alcohol, vaping, cannabis, fentanyl, and other drugs (*Current Problems in Pediatric and Adolescent Health Care*, Vol. 52, No. 6, 2022). They're also working on custom curricula for high-risk groups, including sexual and gender minorities.

The REACH Lab programs, including the comprehensive Safety First curriculum, incorporate honest discussion about the risks and benefits of using substances. For example: Drugs are one way to cope with stress, but exercise, sleep, and eating well can also help. Because many young people care about the environment, one lesson explores how cannabis and tobacco production causes environmental harm.

The programs also dispel myths about how many adolescents are using substances and help them practice skills, such as how to decline an offer to use



Some prevention programs focus on teaching adolescents about their developing brains in a positive way—empowering them to choose to protect their brains and bodies by making healthy choices.

As young people leave secondary school and enter college or adult life, about 30% will binge drink, 8% will engage in heavy alcohol use, and 20% will use illicit drugs.

drugs in a way that resonates with them. They learn about the developing brain in a positive way—whereas teens were long told they can't make good decisions, Safety First empowers them to choose to protect their brains and bodies by making healthy choices across the board.

"Teens can make good decisions," Halpern-Felsher said. "The equation is just different because they care more about certain things—peers, relationships—compared to adults."

MOTIVATING YOUNG PEOPLE

Because substance use and mental health are so intertwined, some programs can do prevention successfully with very little drug-focused content. In one of the PreVenture Program's workshops for teens, only half a page in a 35-page workbook explicitly mentions substances.

"That's what's fascinating about the evidence base for PreVenture," said clinical

psychologist Patricia Conrod, PhD, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Montreal who developed the program. "You can have quite a dramatic effect on young people's substance use without even talking about it."

PreVenture offers a series of 90-minute workshops that apply cognitive behavioral insights upstream (addressing the root causes of a potential issue rather than waiting for symptoms to emerge) to help young people explore their personality traits and develop healthy coping strategies to achieve their long-term goals.

Adolescents high in impulsivity, hopelessness, thrill-seeking, or anxiety sensitivity face higher risks of mental health difficulties and substance use, so the personalized material helps them practice healthy coping based on their personality type. For example, the PreVenture workshop that targets anxiety sensitivity helps young people learn to challenge cognitive distortions that

can cause stress, then ties that skill back to their own goals.

The intervention can be customized to the needs of a given community (in one trial, drag racing outstripped substance use as the most problematic thrill-seeking behavior). In several randomized controlled trials of PreVenture, adolescents who completed the program started using substances later than peers who did not receive the intervention and faced fewer alcohol-related harms (Newton, N. C., et al., *JAMA Network Open*, Vol. 5, No. 11, 2022). The program has also been shown to reduce the likelihood that adolescents will experiment with illicit substances, which relates to the current overdose crisis in North America, Conrod said (*Archives of General Psychiatry*, Vol. 67, No. 1, 2010).

"People shouldn't shy away from a targeted approach like this," Conrod said. "Young people report that having the words and skills to manage their traits is actually helpful, and the research shows that at behavioral level, it really does protect them."

As young people leave secondary school and enter college or adult life, about 30% will binge drink, 8% will engage in heavy alcohol use, and 20% will use illicit drugs (Alcohol and Young Adults Ages 18 to 24, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2023; "SAMHSA Announces National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) Results Detailing Mental Illness and Substance Use Levels in 2021"). But young people are very unlikely to seek help, even if those activities cause them distress,

Murphy said. For that reason, brief interventions that leverage motivational interviewing and can be delivered in a school, work, or medical setting can make a big difference.

In an intervention Murphy and his colleagues are testing, young adults complete a questionnaire about how often they drink or use drugs, how much money they spend on substances, and negative things that have happened as a result of those choices (getting into an argument or having a hangover, for example).

In an hour-long counseling session, they then have a non-judgmental conversation about their substance use, where the counselor gently amplifies any statements the young person makes about negative outcomes or a desire to change their behavior. Participants also see charts that quantify how much money and time they spend on substances, including recovering from being intoxicated, and how that stacks up against other things they value, such as exercise, family time, and hobbies.

"For many young people, when they look at what they allocate to drinking and drug use, relative to these other things that they view as much more important, it's often very motivating," Murphy said.

A meta-analysis of brief alcohol interventions shows that they can reduce the average amount participants drink for at least 6 months (Mun, E.-Y., et al., *Prevention Science*, Vol. 24, No. 8, 2023). Even a small reduction in alcohol use can be life-altering, Murphy said. The fourth or fifth

FURTHER READING

Public Policy Statement on Prevention
American Society of Addiction Medicine, 2023

Listen to young people: How to implement harm reduction in the collegiate setting
Christie, N. C., 2023

Brief alcohol interventions for young adults: Strengthening effects and disentangling mechanisms to build personalized interventions for widespread uptake
Special issue of *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 2022

Addressing adolescent substance use with a public health prevention framework: The case for harm reduction
Winer, J. M., et al. *Annals of Medicine*, 2022

A breath of knowledge: Overview of current adolescent e-cigarette prevention and cessation programs
Liu, J., et al. *Current Addiction Reports*, 2020

drink on a night out, for example, could be the one that leads to negative consequences—so reducing intake to just three drinks may make a big difference for young people.

Conrod and her colleagues have also adapted the PreVenture Program for university students; they are currently testing its efficacy in a randomized trial across multiple institutions.

Christie is also focused on the young adult population. As a policy intern with Students for Sensible Drug Policy, she created a handbook of evidence-based policies that college campuses can use to reduce harm among students but still remain compliant with federal law. For example, the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act mandates that higher education institutions formally state that illegal drug use is not allowed on campus but does not bar universities from taking an educational or harm reduction-based approach if students violate that policy.

"One low-hanging fruit is for universities to implement a Good Samaritan policy, where students can call for help during a medical emergency and won't get in trouble, even if illegal substance use is underway," she said.

Ultimately, taking a step back to keep the larger goals in focus—as well as staying dedicated to prevention and intervention approaches backed by science—is what will help keep young people healthy and safe, Weiner said.

"What everyone can agree on is that we want kids to have the best life they can," he said. "If we can start there, what tools do we have available to help?" ■

BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY/GETTY IMAGES



JOINING THE GENERATIONS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Psychologists are working to solve pressing problems such as loneliness and climate change by bridging generational divides and combining the strengths of older and younger people

BY HEATHER STRINGER

In the summer of 2022, 17-year-old Jaan Rothschild jumped at an opportunity to partner with a retiree to mentor a preschooler. He recognized that most of his daily interactions were with teenagers, and “I wanted to get outside of my shell and gain some new perspectives,” said Rothschild, who lived in New York City at the time. He joined a new program, Sesame 3G Mentoring, founded by a former Sesame Workshop executive who wanted to spark empathy and joy by creating three-generational trios. Rothschild would lead a Zoom discussion with a preschooler about a Sesame Street segment, and his older mentor would debrief with him after each session.

Rothschild and his mentor, Melvin Ming, 79, a former CEO of Sesame Workshop, talked for two and a half hours at their first meeting. “We were both interested in each other’s stories,” said Rothschild, who learned about Ming’s history immigrating from Bermuda and navigating a career in the United States. Ming said he rarely interacted with teenagers and enjoyed seeing Rothschild build confidence in drawing out a preschooler who was initially shy and quiet.

The Sesame Workshop Alumni Network launched the three-generational program in response to the crisis of loneliness and depression in the United States, particularly among older adults and

teenagers. Researchers at Stanford University are studying the Sesame 3G program to test the effects on emotional well-being, confidence, development of a growth mindset, and feelings of intergenerational connectedness.

Interactions between the older and younger generations are far less common today than in previous periods of history, but increasing those connections has the potential to impact some of society’s most intractable problems, said Marc Freedman, founder of CoGenerate, an organization dedicated to bridging generational divides. “In the early part of the 20th century, we reorganized society to make it more efficient by creating laws and institutions that moved young people into

educational institutions, middle-age people into workplaces, and older people into retirement communities and nursing homes,” said Freedman. “But the end result was that the generational twains stopped meeting and we created a nation that has largely lost a sense of the wholeness of life.”

For some, the feeling of threat created by the COVID-19 pandemic further inflamed intergenerational tensions (Drury, L., *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 78, No. 4, 2022). “Younger people were vilified as reckless, while protecting older people from infection was viewed as unnecessarily

curtailing others’ freedoms and damaging to the economy,” said Dominic Abrams, PhD, a professor of social psychology at the University of Kent in the United Kingdom who studies age-based stereotypes.

This era of age segregation coincides with unprecedented age diversity in the United States because of declining birth rates and increasing life expectancy. In 1900, when people lived to an average age of 47 in the United States, about 40% of Americans were under the age of 20 and 6% were over age 60. Today, there are relatively equal numbers of people in every age group. “It’s important not to

sleepwalk through this opportunity to put teams of people together that combine the skills of young people who are ambitious and energetic with older people who are experienced and motivated to address societal needs to solve today’s pressing problems,” said Laura Carstensen, PhD, a psychology professor at Stanford University and founding director of the Stanford Center on Longevity. “Rather than seeing older adults as a burden on society, we should be really excited about the possibilities that age diversity creates.”

She and other psychologists are among those pioneering a multigenerational movement that connects age groups in work, communities, and schools. These efforts have the potential not only to improve the nation’s mental and physical health but also to tackle societal issues such as climate change.

Data from a recent CoGenerate survey revealed the pent-up demand for intergenerational action, with more than 96% of respondents agreeing that they want to work with other generations to help America better solve its problems.

The environment was the highest priority issue for older generations, while mental health topped the list for Gen Zers, millennials, and Gen Xers. Education was the only issue that all generations included in their top five. “We live in a society with so much polarization and division,” Freedman said. “Problems like climate change are not something that any one generation can solve.”

THE CONSEQUENCES OF ISOLATION

In May 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General released an advisory announcing the public health crisis of loneliness and isolation—an epidemic that can increase the risk of mortality as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day. Given these consequences, the Surgeon General said the nation has an obligation to make investments in addressing social connection. Multigenerational relationships are an important aspect of “social fitness,” or the ability to make healthy, lasting connections, said Marc Schulz, PhD, a psychology professor at Bryn Mawr College and director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development. Data from the study, which has followed participants for 85 years, has shown that satisfaction with relationships is the best predictor of a happy and healthy life—even more than cholesterol level (Waldinger, R., & Schulz, M., *The Good Life: Lessons from the World’s Longest Scientific Study of Happiness*, Simon and Schuster, 2023). These relationships can include intimate partners, friends, relatives, neighbors, and coworkers across generations. Although it can be uncomfortable to cross the generational divide amid ageist stereotypes, overcoming these barriers “makes the connection that much more energizing,” said Schulz.

To help people from different stages of life connect and learn from one another, in 2020 he and Robert Waldinger, MD, a clinical professor of

DATA FROM A RECENT COGENERATE SURVEY REVEALED THE PENT-UP DEMAND FOR INTERGENERATIONAL ACTION, WITH MORE THAN 96% OF RESPONDENTS AGREEING THAT THEY WANT TO WORK WITH OTHER GENERATIONS TO HELP AMERICA BETTER SOLVE ITS PROBLEMS.

psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, launched Road Maps for Life. In the program, participants meet for five 90-minute sessions on Zoom or in person at community centers, classrooms, senior facilities, or other locations and respond to prompts that facilitate discussions. During one session, they share photos of themselves from earlier in their lives and talk about how their perspectives have changed since then. In a later session, they fill out a diagram that maps key relationships in their lives and describe the importance and frequency of these connections.

“Young people benefit from hearing how older people navigated challenges, and older participants learn about the issues younger people are facing,” Schulz said. For example, younger people have shared the difficulty of finding a meaningful job and their anxiety about committing to one path. Older participants often describe how they have had many jobs, most of which were not what they envisioned when they were in

their 20s, said Schulz.

Researchers are finding evidence that every age group benefits when people participate in intergenerational programs, such as mentoring, community service, or workforce development. Elementary school children who are partnered with an older adult, for example, experience improvements in reading and socioemotional learning. Middle school students experience benefits in academic performance, peer relationships, and family dynamics in addition to decreased depressive symptoms, reduced bullying, and higher levels of empathy. Older volunteers in these programs also reap benefits, including decreased social isolation and depression, greater life satisfaction and cognitive functioning, and reductions in falls and frailty (*Making the Case for Intergenerational Programs*, Generations United, 2021).

Creating spaces for multigenerational connection is particularly important in marginalized communities because



Student Jaan Rothschild (left) and former Sesame Workshop CEO Melvin Ming mentored a preschooler together through a program the Sesame Workshop Alumni Network created to spark joy and empathy by connecting people from different generations.

the transmission of wisdom can help with navigating life at the edges of society, said Nic Weststrate, PhD, an assistant professor of educational psychology at the University of Illinois Chicago. In 2019, Weststrate and his colleagues launched The LGBTQ+ Intergenerational Dialogue Project, a group that includes 15 elders and 15 college students, all from the LGBTQ+ community, who meet biweekly in Chicago during the school year. In the meetings, several members share stories from their lives related to topics such as HIV/AIDS, ageism, or media representation, and others are invited to respond. “Many of the young people have never connected with an elder because many elders have only recently felt comfortable coming out,” Weststrate said. “Elders are sometimes afraid to interact with youth because they have falsely been characterized as groomers, recruiters, or predators.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, group members were concerned because queer people were disproportionately affected by the virus. “The youth were not used to living in fear, and the elders reminded them that they were part of a resilient community that had survived the AIDS crisis,” said Weststrate. He also teaches participants that conflict is essential for learning from one another, and this truth surfaced when younger members described themselves as “queer.” This term felt shameful for several older members, and the



Attorney W. Amon Burton (left), who participated as a fellow in Stanford's Distinguished Careers Institute intergenerational learning program, works with students on a design school challenge.

group took the opportunity to ask questions and understand different perspectives. Weststrate's studies have shown that valuing intergenerational storytelling is associated with positive psychosocial identity (*Journal of Homosexuality*, 2023). “Psychologists need to get out into the community and create these intergenerational experiences,” Weststrate said. “It has been healing to both talk about difficult things and laugh together.”

‘GENERATIONAL INTELLIGENCE’ AT WORK

The workplace is one setting where the generations are less segregated in modern American society because 20-somethings may regularly interact and collaborate with Gen Xers and boomers. Megan Gerhardt,

PhD, a professor of management at Miami University in Ohio, noticed early in her career that colleagues were often irritated by generational differences. “I knew we needed to be smarter about how workers thought about these differences,” she said. “Rather than seeing them as a hindrance, they could be an asset.”

She discovered that most of the generational resources available to companies played into tired tropes: The Silent Generation (born 1925–45) was loyal but traditional; baby boomers (1946–64) were collaborative but averse to change; Generation X (1965–80) was independent but bleak; millennials (1981–96) were driven but entitled; and Generation Z (1997–2012) was progressive but disloyal.

To help leaders foster productive intergenerational conversations, Gerhardt now teaches workers how to cultivate generational intelligence, or “Gentelligence” as she calls it. During keynote addresses at organizations such as Chubb and the National Conflict Resolution Center, she helps people learn to identify assumptions about younger or older colleagues and take time to be curious rather than judgmental (Gerhardt, M., et al., *Gentelligence: The Revolutionary Approach to Leading an Intergenerational Workforce*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2021). For example, a recent college graduate who was hired during the pandemic may assume a flexible workplace includes the freedom to work anywhere most or all of the time, while someone who has commuted to the office for 30 years may consider just one day a week at home to be “flexible,” Gerhardt said.

Taking time to understand different age groups will help workers accept one another and generate creative solutions to problems. Gerhardt also teaches the value of “reverse mentoring,” or fostering a company culture in which older workers are encouraged to learn from younger ones, and vice versa (Stockkamp, M., & Godshalk, V. M., *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2022). Since the publication of her book in 2021, the demand for keynote addresses has tripled, and she's spoken to media, technology, restaurant, sports, financial, and other types of organizations throughout the country.

“WE LIVE IN A SOCIETY WITH SO MUCH POLARIZATION AND DIVISION. PROBLEMS LIKE CLIMATE CHANGE ARE NOT SOMETHING THAT ANY ONE GENERATION CAN SOLVE.”
MARC FREEDMAN, CEO OF COGENERATE



Participants in the LGBTQ+ Intergenerational Dialogue Project listen to Pat McCombs, a veteran organizer and social activist who has been instrumental in supporting the rights and well-being of the Black lesbian community in Chicago since the 1970s.

Lisbeth Drury, PhD, an associate professor at Birkbeck, University of London, who studies stereotypes in the workplace, urges organizational leaders to design assignments and projects that showcase the attributes of different age groups to help workers develop appreciation for the skills of different generations. In a recent study currently under review, Drury found that good-quality,

age-diverse contact at work was related to both reduced relationship conflict and reduced task conflict, or disagreements about how to tackle a project.

WELCOMING RETIREES ON CAMPUS

College campuses are also creating new opportunities for older generations to mix with undergraduate and graduate students. In 2020, Arizona

State University opened a new intergenerational complex called Mirabella that houses residents 62 or older who can take classes and access campus activities. Younger students who are studying music, art, nursing, and computer science provide support in their areas of expertise to the residents, and four students studying music or dance live in Mirabella each year.

At Stanford University, the Distinguished Careers Institute (DCI) invites retired leaders—the majority of whom are not alums of the university—to return to a college campus to explore options for the next stage of life. The DCI fellows, who are an average age of 60, participate in classes, partner with students on class projects, and join clubs and organizations related to their interests. Though the fellows typically have extensive work and leadership experience, they are encouraged to learn from the younger students.

“We coach them not to be the first person to raise their hand in class and to let the students be leaders on the group projects,” said Katherine Connor, MS, MBA, executive director of Stanford’s DCI. The experience has led many fellows to launch programs that address local, national, or global problems, such as the need for more leadership training for girls and women in Africa and the challenges involved in establishing a new life after incarceration. One DCI fellow founded a company that produces a natural seaweed supplement for cattle that reduces methane, a greenhouse

gas emission. Carstensen and Claire Growney, PhD, a post-doctoral fellow at the Stanford Center on Longevity, are launching a study to explore whether learning outcomes and attitudes toward people from other generations improve when DCI fellows are in the classroom.

MOVING FROM ANXIETY TO ACTION

Advocates of co-generational innovation agree that different age groups will more likely enjoy the connection if they share a purpose. Aware of the fact that climate change is a common concern for the young and old, Mick Smyer, PhD, an emeritus professor of psychology at Bucknell University, started leading multigenerational groups in discussions about how they could take

action to combat this problem. “There is a belief that older people don’t care about this issue, but this is a myth,” said Smyer. He also knew research showed that roughly half of young people feel ignored or dismissed when they try to talk about climate change. “I wanted to create an opportunity for intergenerational connection about this issue,” said Smyer, who founded a nonprofit called Growing Greener that helps individuals and organizations develop clear next steps to take action to reduce climate change.

Drawing on principles of psychology and human-centered design, Smyer started leading 40-minute sessions that included participants of multiple generations, who began to view themselves as potential leaders in climate action. He invites participants to imagine



Ali Kelling and Marti Smith at an informal gathering of the LGBTQ+ Intergenerational Dialogue Project.

FURTHER READING

The New Map of Life
Stanford Center on Longevity, 2022

The CoGenerate Innovation Fellowship: Supporting leaders of intergenerational initiatives
Halvorsen, C. J., et al.
Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 2023

Theoretical orientations to intergenerational home sharing: Implications for direct social work practice on addressing student debt and aging-in-community
Gonzales, E., et al.
Clinical Social Work Journal, 2020

who studies intergenerational initiatives. “People living in multigenerational households have likely experienced social and financial benefits from that arrangement and felt a sense of intergenerational cohesion, which could lead them to see the potential benefits of intergenerational programs,” he said.

Although the CoGenerate survey revealed that many people share an interest in working with other generations to solve America’s problems, most reported at least one obstacle to doing so, such as difficulty finding opportunities to undertake this type of work. Research shows that intergenerational programs can be highly effective in improving mental and behavioral health even when they are low-cost and relatively small in scale (Canedo-Garcia, A., et al., *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 8, 2017). Adapting existing modalities or interventions to include different generations can be one low-budget strategy to accelerate the pace of social change, said Halvorsen. One of his students demonstrated the power of valuing age diversity when she started leading group support sessions that included students and retirees. Participants talked about challenges they were facing with dating, stress, jobs, depression, and other topics. “At first the college students were leery to talk about topics like dating with retirees, but everyone ended up loving the experience,” Halvorsen said. “The students reported that they enjoyed the group explicitly because older adults were part of it.” ■



KAREN MORRIS

KAREN MORRIS

a place they care about, picture it in 50 years, and decide on a positive step they could take to protect this place. “People quickly realize that they can make a bigger impact by doing something together,” Smyer said. Groups have organized projects such as a recycled clothing drive and solar panel installations. Smyer also trains people to lead sessions in their communities, schools, workplaces, and other settings, and several thousand have participated.

TRYING SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

Although the multigenerational movement has started to gain traction, pioneers in these

efforts agree more innovators and funding are needed. Data from the CoGenerate survey suggest that recruiting leaders in Black and Hispanic communities could be an important step forward: About 33% of Black and Hispanic respondents reported that the opportunity to work across generations makes them “much more likely” to get involved, compared with 16% of White respondents. Though the researchers did not study the reason for the discrepancy, one cause could be the higher rates of multigenerational households in Black and Hispanic families in the United States, said Cal Halvorsen, PhD, MSW, an assistant professor at the Boston College School of Social Work



Wang



Masten



Taylor



Noltemeyer



Çiftçi

PSYCHOLOGISTS IN THE NEWS

Shirley Wang, PhD, was named to the Forbes list of “30 Under 30 North America in Healthcare.” Wang’s main research focus is suicide prevention. She uses machine learning and mathematical modeling—including smartphones, wearable biosensors, and medical record data—to examine why and for whom mental disorders develop. She will be joining Yale University’s faculty as an assistant professor in the department of psychology in July 2024.

The University of Louisville has awarded the 2024 Grawemeyer Award in Psychology to **Ann Masten, PhD**, for her work in resilience science. The \$100,000 annual prize honors original and creative ideas that substantially impact the field of psychology. Masten’s research focuses on risk and resilience in development with a focus on the processes leading to positive adaptation and outcomes in children and families whose lives are threatened by adversity. She currently serves as a professor in the University of Minnesota’s Institute of Child Development in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The University of Georgia has named **Jeanette Taylor, PhD**, as its next vice provost for academic affairs. Taylor is

currently the associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and a professor of psychology at Florida State University (FSU). Taylor began her professional academic career at FSU in 2000 as an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology. She held multiple roles in the department, including serving for 6 years as chair and 3 years as director of clinical training for the department’s doctoral program in clinical psychology. Her new position is effective on April 1.

Miami University has chosen **Amity Noltemeyer, PhD**, to serve as interim dean of the university’s College of Education, Health, and Society. Prior to this new role, Noltemeyer served as associate dean of the university’s graduate school. She conducts research on positive behavioral interventions and supports, school climate, racial disparities and implicit bias in school discipline decisions, and resilience among students.

To help alleviate a school counseling shortage in Mesa Public Schools in Mesa, Arizona, Arizona State University (ASU) has created a new master’s degree concentration that is focused on training students to become K–12 counselors and enabling them to apply

for licensure in schools upon graduation. Psychologist **Ayşe Çiftçi, PhD**, director of ASU’s School of Counseling and Counseling Psychology, helped fast-track the change due to the heavy need for counselors. ASU students can now enroll in the program for the Fall 2024 semester.

South Georgia Technical College has selected **Michelle Seay, EdD**, as its 2024 Rick Perkins Instructor of the Year. The award has been an ongoing statewide event since 1991 and is designed to recognize technical college instructors who make significant contributions to technical education through innovation and leadership in their fields. Seay has been on the faculty at South Georgia Tech since 2000 as a general core and psychology instructor.

Vonnie C. McLoyd, PhD, will receive an Atkinson Prize in Psychological and Cognitive Sciences from the National Academy of Sciences for her studies on poverty’s impact on human development. McLoyd is the Ewart A. C. Thomas Collegiate Professor of Psychology at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She, along with other winners, will be honored in a ceremony during the National Academy of Sciences’ 161st annual meeting. ■

News You Can Use

Career

NEW IDEAS FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS WHO WANT TO ENHANCE THEIR SKILLS AND ADVANCE THEIR CAREERS



PSYCHOLOGY GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

Psychologists are increasingly consulting in the entertainment industry to improve mental health portrayals on-screen and more. And the industry is eager for psychologists' expertise.

BY ANNA MEDARIS

Helen Hsu, PsyD, was about 350 miles from Hollywood—and a million more miles mentally—when producers called.

It was 2016, and Hsu, an expert in adolescent and multicultural mental health, was providing clinical care for low-income children and families and overseeing a

public school-based counseling program. She rarely, if ever, watched TV.

But the folks on the line invited Hsu to join their world and consult on the Netflix drama *13 Reasons Why*, which ran from 2017 to 2020 and depicts the impact of a teen's suicide on her classmates as they uncover why she took her life.

Hsu, who frequently talked to journalists about teen mental health but had never been involved in a project of that scale, was in. “I thought, here’s another opportunity to get information to an audience that’s far larger than what I could ever do academically,” she said.

While the show received criticism from some mental health professionals—particularly for a graphic suicide scene Netflix later removed—it also was linked to an uptick in calls to crisis lines, raised awareness of sexual assaults among men, and prompted crucial parent-child conversations, Hsu said, noting that the popularity of the book the show was based on indicated a hunger among youth to talk about these hard issues.

“I’m a firm believer in meeting young people where they are at,” she said. The show’s second season premiere reached 6 million viewers in just 3 days.

Hsu is one of many psychologists working to infuse the entertainment industry—from film and TV to theater and music to gaming and science fiction—with psychological science and accurate information about mental health, mental illness, and mental health treatment. The partnership, though not without its pain points, can be win-win, both psychologists and creatives say: Mental health professionals get a chance to improve the stories coming out of Hollywood and other entertainment hubs, and storytellers get to tell more authentic stories and create more realistic characters. As a result, in the best-case

scenario, well-made shows attract more viewers, and our collective mental health elevates.

“Storytelling has always been a way for us to find healing, to better understand our own identities and one another, to understand differences, to be able to safely and more confidently talk about the things that, under other circumstances, might feel too vulnerable, unsafe, personal,” said Drea Letamendi, PhD, a clinical psychologist in Los Angeles who advises the gaming, visual effects, and entertainment media industries. “So we can use the media to talk about very impactful, real psychological topics and increase their awareness. And in many ways, this increases people’s interest and buy-in in psychological science, which is really important right now for our field.”

The partnership is savvy from a business perspective, too, Noopur Agarwal, MTV Entertainment Studios’ vice president of social impact, added. “It’s absolutely vital the entertainment industry is really speaking to the mental health aspect of people’s lives because it’s so front and center now,” she said. “There is a lot our audience can and does learn from the content they watch, and it shapes norms and it changes the conversation.”

ROOM FOR GROWTH

While pop culture representations of mental illness, marginalized communities, and human behavior have improved over the past few decades, more work is needed to destigmatize psychological conditions in

all populations and showcase healthy ways to seek help.

For example, of the 3,815 characters in 100 top films from 2023, just over 2% experienced a mental health condition, according to research by the University of Southern California’s Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (AII), the world’s leading think tank that studies diversity and inclusion in entertainment. With funding from MTV Entertainment Studios, AII now houses the Mental Health Storytelling Initiative—a coalition of more than 60 entertainment media companies and mental health expert organizations, including APA, aiming to raise awareness and change the narrative on mental health.

AII’s research has also found that when mental illness is portrayed, it is not reflective of the culture at large, where people from all backgrounds and with all identities are affected.

“I’d really love to see more full-bodied stories of the clients we see—they’re very diverse,” Hsu said. “Mental health challenges happen in every community. People do recover, but what does that look like? And they’re not dangerous. In fact, unfortunately, most of my clients are taken advantage of by so-called ‘normal’ people.”

And yet, AII has found that 72% of 2022 film characters with a mental health condition were perpetrators of violence, even though psychological research has long shown that few people with mental illness are violent. What’s more, many films continue to normalize

dehumanizing language like “freak” and “crazy,” and do not often feature characters who need mental health treatment actually seeking it.

“Most film and TV makers aren’t trying to cause harm to an audience, but the way the system is set up, it’s not always a clear-cut path to figure out, ‘Am I telling the story in a way that’s harmful—or authentic?’” said Ashley Kolaya, head of the Mental Health Storytelling Initiative, who led a training in November 2023 at APA headquarters aimed at introducing psychologists to the types of opportunities available in entertainment, and how to work with creatives effectively.

Psychologists can help clear that path. For Hsu’s work on *13 Reasons Why*, for example, she urged writers to portray the

long-lasting impacts a suicide has on a person’s family and peers—rather than dwell on the tragedy itself. She also encouraged creators to include conversations about safe sex given some of the characters’ risky behaviors. She met with the actor who played the school counselor to help him grasp the pressure his character might face, too.

“I said, ‘Listen, you might be one counselor who doesn’t even have a clinical degree, and you’ve got hundreds of students,’” said Hsu, now the outreach director at Stanford’s Counseling and Psychological Services department. “He really depicted the conundrum that many counselors are put in: a ton of responsibility without the right training or support. And I thought that came through well in the show.”

Ashley Kolaya (from left) of the Mental Health Storytelling Initiative, Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen of the WeBe Life Foundation, Daylee Baker of MTV Entertainment Studios, Dr. Alfiee Breland-Noble of the AAKOMA Project, and DJ Nash, showrunner of ABC’s *A Million Little Things* (onscreen), talked to psychologists about ways to connect with the entertainment industry at a training at APA headquarters in November.



MORE THAN ENTERTAINMENT

More than preventing harm, involving psychologists in show creation can equip viewers with mental health tools—whether the viewers are conscious of it or not. For example, three-quarters of viewers of the Paramount+ teen drama series *Wolf Pack*, which follows teenagers in a California town after a wildfire drives a supernatural creature to attack, said the show introduced them to new coping mechanisms. “Lion’s breath,” for one, is a mouth-wide, tongue-out breathing technique the central characters—and real-life yogis—use to manage stress and anxiety.

“What was really cool about *Wolf Pack* was that it delivered education and empowerment without people seeking it out or even realizing that’s what was happening,” Agarwal said.

It is no coincidence that mental health professionals—in this case, from the JED Foundation focused on youth suicide prevention—were involved in that production from the beginning (like sitting in the writers’ room) to the end (like developing mental health resources to pair with the show’s release).

“I hope to see more of those collaborations that span the full scope of the production,” Agarwal added, “because that’s where the magic happens.”

Showtime’s *The Chi*, a coming-of-age drama set in Chicago’s South Side, also modeled healthy ways to seek support in communities where therapy is stigmatized or inaccessible, thanks to the input of

Virginia-based psychologist Alfiee Breland-Noble, PhD, who was tapped for her expertise in mental health in diverse communities.

When working through one scene featuring a group of Black men in a makeshift support group, Breland-Noble, creator of the *Couched in Color* podcast, told the creative team: “I think it’s important to highlight that you don’t need a degree to run a discussion group, but you do need help thinking through the kinds of questions you might ask.” She also supported the Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective to put out materials for viewers interested in replicating the scenario.

The portrayal was well received, with one fan writing on X, formerly Twitter, “that scene in the chi episode where the men had a group meeting just to be vulnerable and speak their truth was so refreshing to watch. all men (especially Black men) deserve the safe space to just release everything they’ve been holding in.”

The youngest viewers can pick up skills from psychologist-informed TV, too. Temple University developmental psychologist Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, PhD, for one, has long worked with *Sesame Street* to conceptualize various seasons’ themes—be it critical thinking or curiosity—and bake the research right in.

When Sesame Workshop evaluated the show’s impact, Hirsh-Pasek said it found that the kids who watched more episodes not only solved related

problems more effectively, but they also thought about problem-solving in a better way, and with grit: “They would give more tries—they wouldn’t just give one try and quit,” she said.

Even storylines that are not explicitly tied to psychology—or based in reality, for that matter—can heighten viewers’ mental health by helping them establish community or witness resilience, said Letamendi, who created and hosts *The Arkham Sessions*, a podcast about the psychology of superheroes and other pop culture narratives.

“We don’t just watch horror and science fiction or fantasy. We then go online and talk about it,” she said. “So I always say: Our relationship with media is bigger than the story itself. Yes, it can be a way of escapism, but media also buffers loneliness; it can trigger social responses like finding others who are just like you. There are really fascinating and uplifting ways in which heroic stories, in particular, can teach us about resilience and overcoming hardships.”

BEYOND THE SCRIPT

Psychologists are also wading into the entertainment business in ways other than reviewing scripts.

APA’s Science Directorate has an ongoing partnership with the Science and Entertainment Exchange program of the National Academy of Sciences to advance the way psychological science is portrayed in entertainment, and recently cohosted an event called “Storytelling and the Science of True and False Memories” featuring psychologists

Jeffrey Zacks, PhD, and Elizabeth Loftus, PhD.

Psychologists Ariana Hoet, PhD, of the children’s mental health organization On Our Sleeves, and Eric Butter, PhD, of Nationwide Children’s Hospital in Ohio, joined leaders from the entertainment industry and children’s mental health at a White House roundtable in October 2023 focused on ways to decrease stigma and promote access to mental health resources through film and television. APA released a new resource for viewers called *The Healing Guide: Inspired by the Color Purple* to coincide with the 2023 film release.

“The possibilities are limitless. You can do on-camera work, you can do behind-the-scenes work, you can be a consultant,” said Breland-Noble, founder of the AAKOMA Project, a nonprofit dedicated to the mental health of youth of color.

Dr. Drea Letamendi is a clinical psychologist in Los Angeles who advises the gaming, visual effects, and entertainment media industries.



IDRIS NJIKE

She has discussed suicide and women’s mental health on *Red Table Talk* with actor and host Jada Pinkett Smith; led a guided meditation for the cast of *The Power of Kindness*, a film she cohosted with Lady Gaga; and helped put together the first annual Mental Health Youth Action Forum, a partnership between the White House and MTV.

There is also live theater; reality TV casting (see sidebar); opportunities in other arts, be it museum curation or ballet; and expertise needed for projects like the Mental Health Media Guide, which briefs creators on best mental health storytelling tactics.

Letamendi, meanwhile, most enjoys postproduction or marketing work. That could mean writing an article about a particular character, creating a documentary about the making of a film, or organizing panels at sci-fi conventions.

“It’s not necessarily changing a story that exists and that is curated and developed by the storytellers—it’s addressing the impact that that story has on our psychology,” Letamendi said. “And I get really excited about that as a psychologist.”

That excitement is contagious, she has found. “People will say, ‘Because of your podcast, or article you wrote about Spider-Man, or video you did with Warner Bros., I also want to go into mental health,’” she said. “So for me, one of the most rewarding outcomes is to welcome young people into our profession through this channel.”

COURTESY OF RICHARD LEVAK

A DIFFERENT TYPE OF STORYTELLING: REALITY TV CONSULTING

Clinical psychologist Richard Levak, PhD, a Del Mar, California-based personality testing expert, advised on cast screening and provided mental health follow-up for 5 years on *Survivor* and did similar work for the producers of *Big Brother* and *The Amazing Race*.

He says this particular type of entertainment consulting is “wide open” for psychologists’ involvement, especially for those who can break free from clinical and scientific jargon when communicating with the industry. We asked him what he learned from the experience.



How did you get involved in *Survivor*, and what were your responsibilities?

In the Swedish version of the show, which had aired a few years earlier, the first person to get voted off the island died by suicide a month after returning home. So, the mental health of potential contestants was top of mind.

The producers wanted to know the contestants’ core characters and how they might evolve over the course of the show.

My role in the first 10 episodes was to test people and report back to producers about who they really were. Some people play roles. Especially as the genre evolved, people wanted to get on the show, so they played a role.

As people got voted off, I had a phone call with them and a follow-up call when they got home. There was a lot of emphasis on making sure people adjusted well to life after *Survivor*.

What did you learn about human behavior?

I was able to broaden my knowledge of personality. In my practice, I saw people high on anxiety. But with reality TV contestants, I often saw people whose anxiety level was two standard deviations below the means. They didn’t even understand a question like, “Have you ever missed a night’s sleep because you were so worried about something?”

Reality TV also helped me understand the wonderful capacity for human resilience. One woman who had been abused wanted to go on *Big Brother*. I didn’t want her to go on, but she thought that not doing it would be essentially experiencing abuse a second time.

The work taught me that it can be unethical to limit someone’s chances for an event they’d like to experience simply because they’ve endured abuse. It taught me that we really have to examine for resilience.

THE HUSTLE

Despite all the appeal, Hollywood is a notoriously tough place in which to “make it,” whether you are a writer, director, actor, producer, or—yes—psychologist.

“Some people would be surprised at how demanding making a television series is for the actors and the crew. Each scene is filmed over and over from every angle. The days are long and often exhausting,” said Barbara Van Dahlen, PhD, a clinical psychologist who, among many other projects in the entertainment industry, consulted on ABC’s drama *A Million Little Things*, which follows a group of friends in Boston learning to live again after the loss of their friend to suicide. “And yet, despite the complexity, the demands, and the stress, stories are created that move us, inspire us, astound us. It’s a privilege to be asked to contribute to the process.”

“If you’re hoping that this is going to give you validation or status or fame or some big bucks, it’s not,” added Ali Mattu, PhD, a clinical psychologist in San Francisco who has been featured in shows on HBO, Netflix, PBS, and other channels for his expertise on anxiety and other mental health topics. “It can, but so can a lot of more reliable paths, like having a thriving practice.”

Mattu said he has worked on many projects that never made it to production, be it due to a tanking budget, studio leadership changes, or simply a script that did not get picked up. “I’ve learned a very important lesson: Until every contract is signed,

until you’re actually filming, until it actually airs, I never believe that this project is going to happen,” Mattu said. “I just don’t get my hopes up.”

Even when a show gets made, psychologists do not always get paid well and sometimes not at all. On-camera work as an expert or commentator, even for a high-profile production like *Today* on NBC, for example, is largely unpaid, Breland-Noble said. “Psychologists have to be willing to make some sacrifices if we want to be engaged in this work,” she said.

For Letamendi, a key sacrifice is time. As a campus health and counseling leader at University of California, Los Angeles, she already works 40 to 60 hours a week in that full-time role. Her media consulting work, then, is typically relegated to nights, weekends, and sometimes holidays.

But she considers the work self-care. “I went into entertainment media because, since I was a kid, that’s what brought me joy, that’s what helped me feel included, that’s what helped me feel that I belonged,” she said.

If you decide the work is for you, here is what psychologists recommend:

■ **Have an established niche or expertise.** Producers found Hsu because she is an expert in teen mental health and had talked to the media on the topic. They tapped Hirsh-Pasek because she is an acclaimed and widely published developmental psychologist. And Van Dahlen, who founded

the nonprofit Give an Hour, is a renowned expert in service members’ mental health and suicide prevention.

“Get really good at something and have that depth of experience that makes you valuable to other people,” Mattu said. “That depth of experience can come from research. It can come from applied experiences of working with organizations and corporations. It can come from years of service, either as a health care professional or in all the different areas in which psychologists can serve and help others.”

■ **Ditch the psychological jargon and learn how creatives work.** “We’re trained really well to communicate with our colleagues in a way that does justice to the complexity of human behavior,” Mattu said. “But everything that makes us good at communicating psychology to other psychologists can make us very bad at communicating psychology to the public.”

That is precisely why the Mental Health Storytelling Initiative came about. The initiative connects creatives with psychological professionals and provides trainings and workshops, like the November 2023 event hosted at APA, to help both parties speak the same language and operate on the same timeline.

“We get studio executives who say, ‘We’d love to hire more psychologists to advise on stories, but we don’t know who to reach out to,’ or, ‘If we do reach out, they don’t understand how quickly we need notes, or they

send long abstracts of information,’” Kolaya said. “We built the training to help decrease that friction.”

■ **Be visible and reachable.** Letamendi recommends getting your name and contact information in various databases, like APA’s Media Referral Service, as well as on your own website and social media channels.

“Do not be afraid to think of your work as a potential for being marketed, being advertised, being networked outside of the traditional psychological discipline,” she said. “That means being a bit more curious, open, and flexible about the way you develop your own repertoire as a psychologist. And it’s true: It’s a little extra hustle.”

That extra work can pay off in a bidirectional way: Not only can creatives find you, but your creative work can bring you clients and patients, depending on what type of psychologist you are.

“Ask yourself: What do you have to offer them?” said Mattu, whose YouTube channel has 277,000 subscribers. “Do you have courses they can buy? A consulting operation? Clinical services? Develop products and services that can scale with your media work.”

■ **Network.** Vanessa Cox, PhD, went to graduate school to become a therapist but came out with an interest in entertainment. She had studied how the Black community is portrayed and affected by the media and wanted her results to do more than sit in an academic journal.

So, she reached out to a friend at the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, who connected Cox with the folks who later offered her a job. The gig—and accompanying move from Michigan to Los Angeles—led to a role working in diversity, equity, and inclusion at Paramount and eventually Cox’s own entertainment consulting company, Uncommon Eye, which launched in 2022. She has worked to increase nuanced, multidimensional representations of Black women on screen.

“I would not have gotten into this had it not been for my colleague,” said Cox, who is also an adjunct associate professor in communications at Long Island University.

■ **Be willing to work your way up.** Van Dahlen recommends finding a mentor or getting involved in a community project that works with media so you can “hit the ground running” if and when you work in entertainment. “The creative team is not likely going to be interested in someone getting up to speed and practicing on them,” she said.

Indeed, Breland-Noble said, while everyone’s path “up” looks different—and often crooked—she does not know any mental health professionals who have started at the top. “You start at the bottom, build your reputation, and work your way up.”

■ **Maintain your integrity ...** About 20 years ago, Hirsh-Pasek created a female superhero that Warner Bros. wanted to acquire. But when she flew to

Los Angeles for the meeting, the creators said they intended to make the character male because that is what they believed would sell. Hirsh-Pasek pushed back, saying, “females deserve superheroes, too.”

“The project manager looked at me and said, ‘Are you not hearing me? Warner Bros. is going to take your character, but it has to be a man,’” Hirsh-Pasek recalls. “I said, ‘I thank you for inviting me out to LA, but I’m not changing my mind on this.’”

“I’m probably a lot poorer,” she continued, “but my point is: We’ll all come up against those kinds of things, and I don’t think it’s ever worth compromising integrity.”

■ **... but know when to compromise.** Cox organizes her feedback into three levels of importance: major, secondary, and minor. If creatives do not incorporate all her advice from the latter two categories, that is OK. “You want to keep this person as a client, and that’s something that you always need to think about,” she said.

In other words: Do not let the risk of not being entirely heard prevent you from speaking up at all, Hirsh-Pasek said.

“I find this to be the most exciting, riveting area of psychology right now: figuring out how we take what we know—I call it edible science—and make it accessible, digestible, and usable for a broader population,” she said. “Producers are always going to write adolescent films, they’re always going to write about relationships, they’re always going to write about anxiety and depression. And if they can get it half right instead of totally wrong, then we have done a really good job.” ■

● REC

VIRTUAL JOB FAIRS

Take Charge of Your Career

There is great demand for your expertise in the field of psychology.

Attend one of the upcoming PsycCareers virtual job fairs and get access to live video and text chat with employers, career coaching, pertinent learning sessions, and more.

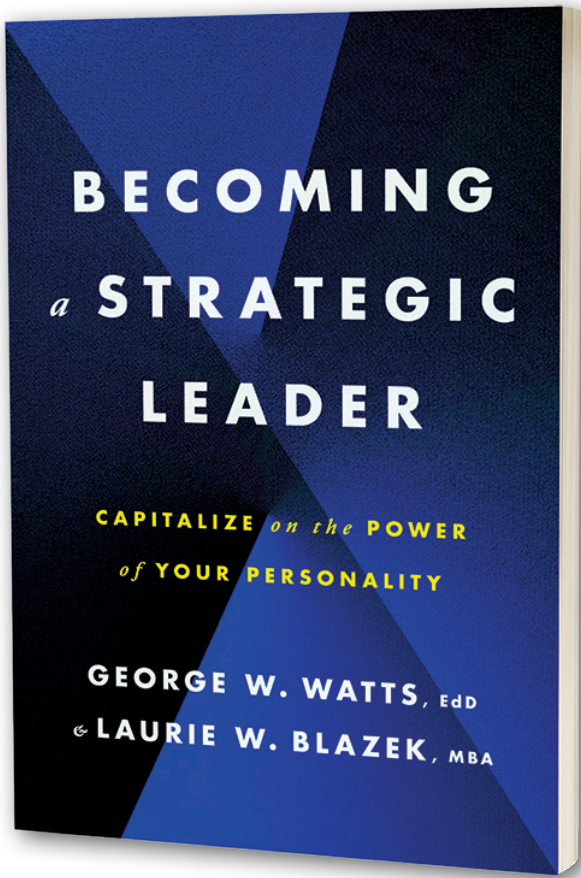
UPCOMING EVENT DATES:

April 12, August 15, and November 15

Register Today: www.psycCareers.com

FPO

FPO



**EXCLUSIVE
DISCOUNT**

Use code **JNLAPA20**
for 20% off and
**FREE DOMESTIC
SHIPPING** when you
order direct from APA.

RECENTLY PUBLISHED

Becoming a Strategic Leader

Capitalize on the Power of Your Personality

GEORGE W. WATTS AND LAURIE W. BLAZEK

This book shows senior leaders how to leverage their unique personalities as an essential resource to help guide their organizations. The authors show readers how to use their Big Five personality profiles to identify their unique personality strengths, how to understand the personality styles of others they encounter in professional scenarios, and how to use this knowledge to steer their organizations to greater success.

January 2024 | 212 pages | Paperback | ISBN 978-1-4338-4306-8 | List \$44.99 | APA Member \$33.75

[BKS.APA.ORG/MONITOR-LEADER](https://bks.apa.org/monitor-leader)



CHRONIC PAIN IS LINKED TO DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY, LEADING TO SIGNIFICANT IMPAIRMENTS IN WORK AND LIFE

Data show higher reports of both anxiety and depression among those with chronic pain compared with those who don't have chronic pain

1 in 20

Approximate number of U.S. adults living with **co-occurring chronic pain and clinically significant symptoms of anxiety and depression**. That translates to roughly 12 million Americans, or about 5% of the U.S. adult population.

55.6%

Percentage of U.S. adults reporting **chronic pain** who also have **unre-mitted anxiety and depression** symptoms, compared with **17.1%** of those with chronic pain who don't report anxiety and depression symptoms.

69.4%

Percentage of U.S. adults with **co-occurring chronic pain, depression, and anxiety**, who said their **work was limited** because of a health problem. Meanwhile, **43.7%** of this population reported **difficulty doing errands alone**, and **55.7%** said they had **trouble participating in social activities**.

Source: De La Rosa, J. S., et al. (2023). Co-occurrence of chronic pain and anxiety/depression symptoms in U.S. adults: Prevalence, functional impacts, and opportunities. *Pain*, 164(9). Available at https://journals.lww.com/pain/fulltext/9900/co_occurrence_of_chronic_pain_and.409.aspx.

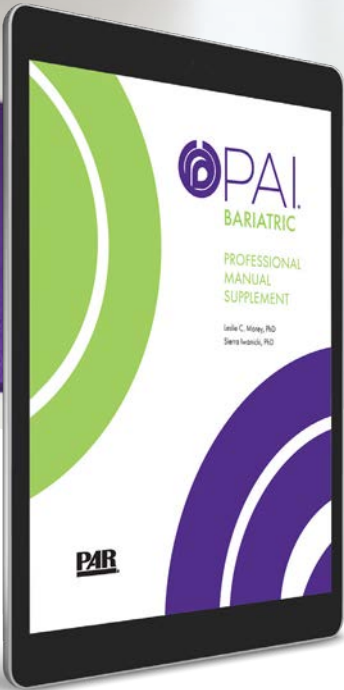


LEARN MORE

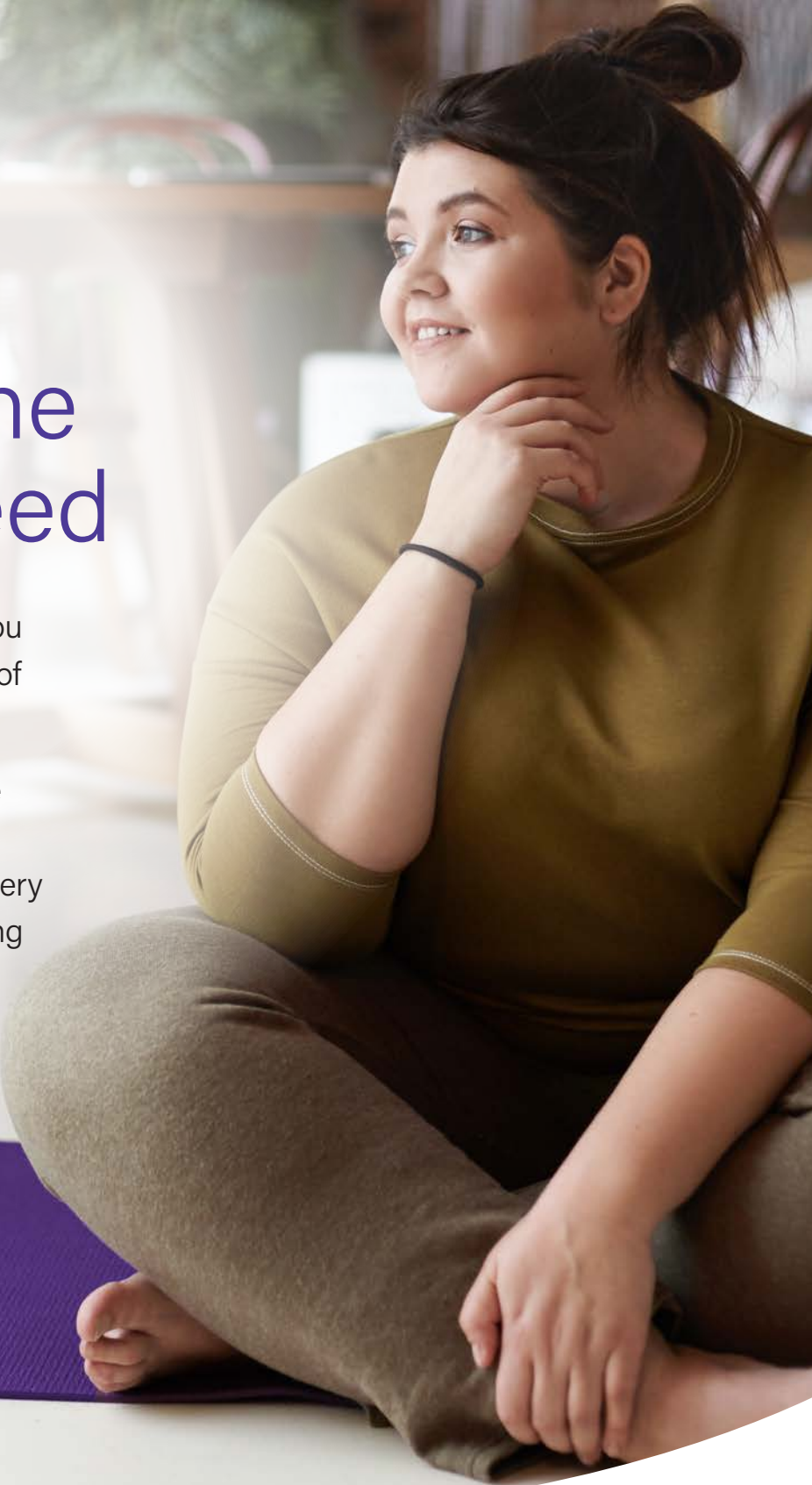
Give them the help they need

The **PAI family** gives you the tools you need—and trust—to assess a variety of psychopathological presentations.

The newest addition to the family, the **PAI Bariatric**, allows you to evaluate psychological factors in bariatric surgery candidates. Administration and scoring take less than an hour.



PAR Creating Connections. Changing Lives.



Scan here for more exciting PAI news!



NEWGETTY IMAGES



**CHRONIC PAIN
IS LINKED TO
DEPRESSION AND
ANXIETY, LEADING
TO SIGNIFICANT
IMPAIRMENTS IN
WORK AND LIFE**

The two conditions appear to feed off each other, as shown by the high percentages of those with both problems compared with those who have one or the other

1 in 20

Approximate number of U.S. adults living with **co-occurring chronic pain and clinically significant symptoms of anxiety and depression**. That translates to roughly 12 million Americans, or about 5% of the U.S. adult population.

55.6%

Percentage of U.S. adults reporting **chronic pain** who also have **unre-mitted anxiety and depression** symptoms, compared with **17.1%** of those with chronic pain who don't report anxiety and depression symptoms.

69.4%

Percentage of U.S. adults with **co-occurring chronic pain, depression, and anxiety**, who said their **work was limited** because of a health problem. Meanwhile, **43.7%** of this population reported **difficulty doing errands alone**, and **55.7%** said they had **trouble participating in social activities**.

Source: De La Rosa, J. S., et al. (2023). Co-occurrence of chronic pain and anxiety/depression symptoms in U.S. adults: Prevalence, functional impacts, and opportunities. *Pain*, 164(9). Available at https://journals.lww.com/pain/fulltext/9900/co_occurrence_of_chronic_pain_and.409.aspx.

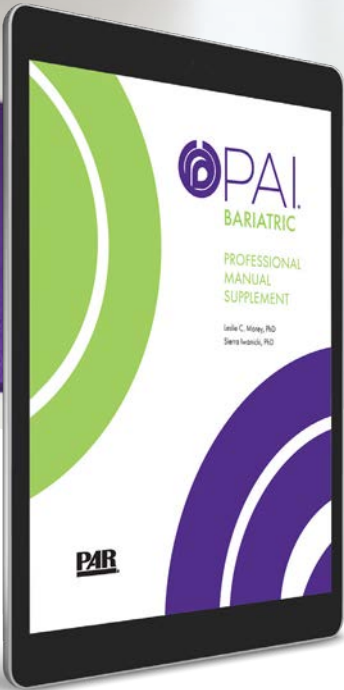


LEARN MORE

**Give them the
help they need**

The **PAI family** gives you the tools you need—and trust—to assess a variety of psychopathological presentations.

The newest addition to the family, the **PAI Bariatric**, allows you to evaluate psychological factors in bariatric surgery candidates. Administration and scoring take less than an hour.



PAR Creating Connections.
Changing Lives.



Scan here for more
exciting PAI news!



Practice Management Done For You



Get your evenings back
with intuitive, award-winning EHR

- ✓ Scheduling & payments
- ✓ Client waitlist & reminders
- ✓ Online forms & bookings
- ✓ Progress notes, letters & reports
- ✓ Practice operations manual
- ✓ In-Platform telehealth



START A
**FREE
TRIAL**

NEW
STARTER
PLANS
\$9.50
PER MONTH

The Most **L**oved and Most Secure
Practice Management Software

powerdiary.com

*Price reflects 50% discount for the first 6 months.

