

On My Mind

Purchase College Counseling Center Monthly Newsletter
www.purchase.edu/departments/counselingcenter



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 4

FEBRUARY 15, 2008

Not Just Another Love Song Chris Libby, PhD

With Valentine's Day arriving this month you're probably hearing a lot of mixed messages, from hall-mark cards and song lyrics, to media messages about love and relationships. February can be a time to get in touch with our own thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs about being in a relationship (or not being in one right now). To many the idealized romance portrayed in movies or in song lyrics appears dramatic and sweet. There is often a trial that the character's love must go through, or a break up or separation that must be overcome to reunite the couple. What about the implied messages in song lyrics like, "Love is forever," "You are the only one for me," "I can't live without you?" One might hear in them that "I can save this relationship" or "I would be a failure

if I end a relationship." The famous Police lyric "Every breath you take, I'll be watching you" while terribly exciting to some could be a mantra of a stalker!

Traps in Thinking to Avoid

Don't fall into the trap of thinking that romance should be spontaneous and perfect like in the movies. Another trap is to think that you must stay with your partner and work things out, no matter how bad it gets. It is ok to end a dating relationship that is no longer satisfying or enjoyable.

You should consider where you stand on several issues:

- Are you afraid of being alone?
- Do you believe that only one person is right for you?
- Do you believe that no one else

would love you or put up with you?

- Do you expect that disagreements should never occur?
- Do you expect that your partner should drop everything for you?
- Do you believe that anyone could be happy all of the time, 24 hours a day?
- Do you find yourself wishing you can control your partner or tell them what they can or can't do?
- Have you had to give up friends or many activities you enjoy in order to be with your partner?

Other words that signal a trap, or what psychologists might call a cognitive distortion, are "always," "never," and "should." If you do find that some of these rigid ways of thinking about relationships apply to

(Continued on Page 2)

Editors:

Shanaz Moudud, PhD

Glenn Pollack, PsyD

Layout & Design:

Debra Sasson, MA

Counseling Center

Humanities Basement

Room 0012

Ph: (914) 251-6390

Hrs: M-F 9am-5pm

"When the power of love

overcomes the love of

power, the world

will know peace"

Jimi Hendrix

Ongoing Events:

- Active Minds Club: Call Donna
- "Relating Matters" Group for Men. Fri. @ 4pm. Call Shirlee & Jason.
- Sports Psychology Workshops.
- Women's Group. Wed. @ 1pm. Call Lois or Shirlee.
- Different Not Diseased: Aspergers Support Group Tues. @ 6:30pm. Call Donna

Coming Soon:

- Performance/Test Anxiety Groups. Call Glenn.
- Hypnosis for Smoking Cessation. Call Glenn.
- Bereavement Group. Call Shanaz.
- Rejuvenation Station 4/23 & 5/7 CCS Lobby

Call x6390 for more information for any of the above.

Myth or Fact?

Myths and Facts About Personal Wellness

1. We Only Use 10 Percent of Our Brains
2. These are the best years of your life! If you think its bad now wait until you get into the 'real world'
3. A major principle of mind/body medicine is the belief in the body's innate healing capacities and the body's natural tendency toward health.
4. Chinese Medicine is the oldest still existing medical treatment
5. Stress is always bad for you.
6. Lack of sleep is a major health issue among college students.
7. Alcohol Helps You Sleep
8. Addiction is a bad habit, the result of weakness and over-indulgence.
9. Bottled Water Is Better for You than Tap Water
10. Yoga is not just a practice of physical postures

Answers

1. **Myth:** Evidence from clinical neurology indicates that most people use the majority of their brains while both awake and asleep.
2. **Myth:** While the college years are memorable and enjoyable, they can also be among the most stressful of times. You are faced with evaluation from your professors, personal and parental expectations, financial stress, living in extremely close quarters with peers, making career decisions, balancing relationships and moving toward independence. Does the world get any more real than this?
3. **Fact:** The body has a tendency towards striving for health, balance and equilibrium.
4. **Myth:** Ayurveda, a 5000 year old Indian method of healing is considered the oldest still-existing medical system. It is a natural

method of healing that may include meditation, yoga, nutritional foods, massage therapy and/or herbal treatments.

5. **Myth:** Stress is to the human condition what tension is to the violin string: too little and the music is dull and raspy; too much and the music is shrill or the string snaps. Stress, if managed well can make us productive and happy; mismanaged stress hurts and can even kill us.

6. **Fact:** In fact, according to the spring 2006 American College Health Association survey, sleep difficulties ranked third among students' top 10 impediments to academic performance and has remained unchanged since 2000. Seven to eight hours of sleep is ideal.

7. **Myth:** Although alcohol initially acts as a sedative, drinking actually disrupts your sleep cycle causing you to wake up fatigued.

8. **Myth:** Addiction is a chronic, life-threatening condition, like hypertension and adult diabetes. Addiction has roots in genetic susceptibility, social circumstance, and personal behavior. Certain drugs are highly addictive while others can be used for longer periods of time before they begin to cause cravings and compulsive use.

9. **Myth:** Bottled water it is not necessarily safer. In fact, all drinking water - bottled and tap - may contain small amounts of contaminants. Furthermore, unlike publicly supplied tap water, the purity of bottled water is not regulated by the government.

10. **Fact:** While Yoga is a practice of physical postures, it is also an art that helps to develop body, mind and spirit. Harmony with both society and ones self is practiced from the ancient system of yoga.

...Love Song (Cont'd)

you, it may be causing some problems with staying in bad relationships or getting into heated arguments in your current relationship. Therapy may help you be a little more flexible with how you think about your relationship.

Another area in which most people could use some practice is learning to fight fair. Is there such a thing as a fair way to fight? Here are some tips for staying cool in those tense moments ^{1,2}. Try to set these ground rules with your partner during a calm moment:

Slow things down. Don't just "take a deep breath" but use any other way of preventing escalation of the argument.

Speak quietly and calmly. Listen carefully to the other person without interrupting. This allows the other person to think about what they are

saying with less pressure.

Be respectful of the other person. You care about one another, so why not attack the issue at hand rather than each other's personalities? No name-calling or using sensitive issues as weapons.

Rather than sound blaming, express your opinions and feelings with I-statements. "I feel/think/want... when..."

Think about what other environmental factors are affecting your mood. Would this conversation be going better if you were having it when you were less sleepy/ tired/frustrated/overheated/hungry or in a different location?

Focus on the present, not the past. The past cannot be changed.

Finally, if arguments are getting out of control, don't let it continue—seek help from the appropriate resources at the Counseling Center, Student Affairs, Residence Life, or UPD. Many of the best relationships occur

when two people bring out the best in each other. They are built on trust and, as sung by Aretha Franklin, on R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Carl Jung once said, "Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves." And, conversely, for many relationships, taking a look at the man or woman in the mirror could help you learn something new and start singing a different tune.

(1) Brooklyn College Counseling Center (<http://pc.brooklyn.cuny.edu/Confires.htm>)

(2) University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire Counseling Services (<http://www.uwec.edu/counsel/pubs/bhr.htm>)

*"It's not a lack of love but a lack of
friendship that makes
unhappy marriages"
-Nietzsche*

Help Wanted...

Dear Dr. Z:

I am a second semester freshman who got back to school this semester determined to change my ways. Last semester I ended up partying too much and my grades were so bad I ended up on academic probation. I want to do better in school and realize that my drinking was a big part of the problem so I need to cut down or maybe even stop drinking. I still want to have fun and hang out with friends, but everyone at Purchase College drinks or smokes weed. Can you help me figure out how to be a good student and still have a social life?

Betty with the Blues

Dear Betty,

First, let me congratulate you on recognizing that your alcohol use has been affecting your grades. The first step toward making change is recognizing that you have a problem. It is hard to tell from your question just how serious a problem the drinking is at this point in your life. For example, are you drinking every day or on the weekends? When you drink how much alcohol do you consume and over what period of time? Another important question is whether there might be other factors like depression or anxiety that are contributing to your choice to drink?

Many students complain that everyone at Purchase uses alcohol and drugs and that there is nothing to do here to have fun except to party. It is simply not the case that all Purchase College students use drug and alcohol. In fact, in the CORE survey, a drug and alcohol use survey, 24 % of Purchase students reported that they had not consumed any alcohol in the last month and 64% said that they had not smoked

any marijuana during that period. If you want to meet new people who do not use alcohol and drugs, it is up to you to go out there and do it. Here are some suggestions to help you get started.

1. Consider joining some new clubs or activities that you are interested in. People who are engaged in doing things that they enjoy and find meaningful are more likely to spend time on those pursuits, rather than hanging out and drinking.

2. Focus on living a healthy lifestyle which includes proper nutrition, exercise, and rest. Although it sounds corny, you may find that when your body is in good shape, you may not feel like you want to drink, because it feels good to wake up clearheaded, well rested, and bright.

3. Identify people who are like-minded who also want to party less and study more, and who you would like to have as friends. Ask one of them to take a walk, have coffee, go see a movie, etc. This can be really hard, but waiting for people to approach you rarely works, so it is up to you to take the first step. You may discover that you can form a network of people who hang out, have fun, but don't use drugs or alcohol as a way to do it.

4. Suggest to friends that they join you in going to a concert, dance performance or play at the Performing Arts Center on weekends. Consider going off campus for a movie or dinner, rather than sitting around someone's dorm room where alcohol or drugs may be available.

5. Be aware that it may be really tough to stop drinking unless you fully understand the

role that alcohol has played in your life. Therefore, I would strongly recommend that you see one of our substance abuse counselors for an alcohol assessment (ext. 6657). You might want to come to the Counseling Center (ext.6390) to talk about any issues that could be interfering with your goals. If you need help academically talk with your professors, your advisor, or check out what the Learning Center (ext.6488) has to offer.

Sincerely,

Dr. Z.

