



The

LIGHTHOUSE

Helping People | Changing Lives

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Spring 2020

Getting to know our Registered Psychotherapists

Chris Bennett and Jordan Pasternack

Interview with Registered Psychotherapist and Hispanic Program Director Samia Saad



Chris : What got you started in the field of psychotherapy?

Samia: I started at The Lighthouse as a volunteer almost thirty years ago. At the time, I was working with the community doing some translation and program work. What got me into the field of psychotherapy was the fact that many who were coming to The Lighthouse were refugees.

Many of these refugees were coming here with a lot of trauma and issues that I wasn't equipped to deal with at the time. I then realized that perhaps I should consider going back to school and studying psychotherapy so I could better help those that came to us. So that's exactly what I did!

C: What is psychotherapy?

S: Psychotherapy is the process of acquiring insight, practicing self-reflection, understand one's self and understand one's emotions, which leads you to understand why you act the way that you do. In the process of psychotherapy, you also learn skills like how to manage stress, how to think in a way that is not distorted, how to act differently and develop skills to manage conflict resolution in one's everyday life. There are so many skills to learn and develop through psychotherapy! Another skill may be, the process of learning how to manage trauma, especially for refugees who've often experienced a lot of trauma, this can be extremely helpful. It's not just refugees who benefit, but these tools and skills we teach/coax can be useful for anyone in regards to the stress and conflicts that arise in day to day life. psychotherapy helps people to develop skills and insight in order to understand themselves and others which in turn helps them to live healthier lives.

C: What barriers exist for clients to access psychotherapy specifically in regards to newcomers/refugees from the Hispanic community?

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Interview with Registered Psychotherapist and Vietnamese Program Director Thuy Tran

Jordan: Why did you become a psychotherapist?

Thuy: My background is a chemistry teacher, I taught high school chemistry in Vietnam. When I came to Canada I wanted to continue my education in chemistry, however people suggested I go into the social work field as there is a high need for the Vietnamese community for those who speak Vietnamese. I registered for The Community Development Program and then Human Service Counsellor Program. When I started full time here at The Lighthouse, working with the Vietnamese community, I saw there was a high need for counselling in Vietnamese for this community. I had a vision where I could develop a service here, that I could provide counselling services for the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants. That is what started my journey.

J: What is important and unique about the techniques used in psychotherapy?

T: Techniques are important in the sense that they are developed by experienced psychotherapists who have worked for many years, with many clients. It's important because it provides a framework and direction for my work. When I am sitting with a client and listening to their story the therapeutic approaches helps me see what the potential root cause of the issue they are experiencing. The client presents the current issue, however underlying that experience is something else. Maybe something in the past has led to their current experience. Just like a medical doctor knows how to do surgery or prescribe medicine, I am equipped with the skills, techniques, and approaches. The client however is the expert on their issue, I am just the helper. Sometimes those approaches do not fit, or is not appropriate when working with Vietnamese clientele.

J: What do you mean when you say some approaches may not be appropriate?

T: The therapeutic approaches were developed by western therapists who may have not known anything about Vietnamese or Asian cultures...

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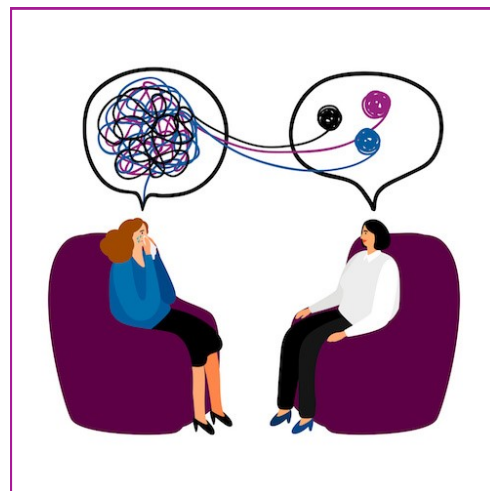
T: ... so they are developed to be suitable within a Western context. When I choose to apply an approach, I have to think about whether it is appropriate or not. At the beginning of my counselling work, I tried to practice based on what I learned from school but it didn't work well. So I had to change those approaches to be more appropriate to the Vietnamese community as well as more culturally sensitive.

J: What might be some barriers that exist for the Vietnamese population to access therapy?

T: The Vietnamese community has a misunderstanding around therapy; they think it is only for crazy people. When you seek out counselling that means "Oh you have a problem," they think that "I don't need someone to solve my problem, I can solve it myself." Over the recent years, when people have serious problems and interact with the authorities they are referred to the Lighthouse for counselling. Another barrier is language; many of my clients do not speak English well. So they cannot get adequate services from English speaking therapists. The third barrier is money; it can be costly if you don't have insurance coverage.

J: Thank you for sharing your time and your experience as a psychotherapist! Is there anything else you would like to say to the people who will be reading this?

T: To our donors, I'd like them to understand more of the work that we do at The Lighthouse. My hope is that they will provide more support in many ways, especially monetary support for those in need. As I've explained earlier, a barrier for accessing counselling is that many people cannot afford to pay for it. The Lighthouse is here to help them, and we have a desire to do so. To the existing clients: I would just like to say that they are all beautiful people and that each of their experiences helps me to learn and grow more. I'm thankful for that. I think that with the programs, participants, clients, whether counseling clients or program clients we all build our community and I appreciate their contribution.



Reflection on Creating Winter Wellness Workshops By: Luz Angelica Castaneda

This winter, I had the opportunity to participate in the development of a wellness workshop at The Lighthouse which would take place every Thursday for six weeks. In collaboration with placement students from Seneca College, Dorinda Charlton and Tara Torrenueva, we were required to develop a logic model and final evaluation for the above mentioned pilot program/workshop. It was a very fulfilling and enjoyable experience and I learned a lot from this process.

The first step was identifying the interests of the population we did this through presenting a survey to the clients of the Neighbourhood Program. The results of the survey concluded that there was a high interest in mental health and wellness services/programs. Each session sought to achieve the goals of the wellness workshops series, which were to provide a safe and welcoming space for the participants to engage in community, break isolation, and alleviate stress thus contributing

to their mental and physical health. I found that my knowledge in mindfulness and relaxation techniques, my experience facilitating women's self-help groups, Dorinda's background in community building activities and Tara's hospitality and organization allowed us to collectively create six sessions.

The experience was very fulfilling and transformative, the participants were open to share their thoughts and emotions, including the students which built rapport in the group, our activities included theme discussion, games, breathing techniques, stretching exercises, mindfulness practices, and arts and crafts and sharing a meal which help us to feel connected, understood and supported. I loved to see the people smiling at the end of every session and the evaluations gave us the feedback necessary to keep us motivated to provide more spaces like this in the future.





Interview with Samia continued from page 1...

S: The con with psychotherapy is that it's expensive to begin with. Today psychotherapy is regulated by the government, which means those that practice have to go to school and become licensed, the flip side of this is that it can become very expensive to access a psychotherapist. Sessions can be anywhere from at least 100-150 dollars, on the lesser end. It's especially hard for new immigrants because there are not enough people in community centres like this one that can actually offer these services for free. It can also be harder for newcomers to access or find psychotherapists due to the fact that many are not confident with English as their second language. These are some of the barriers that exist for newcomers who are in need of these kinds of services and many are truly in need.

C: That's a great segue into our next question. What considerations are needed when working with someone with immigration status or no status?

S: When someone is a refugee or is currently going through an immigration process and doesn't have full status yet, it can cause another major barrier. The barrier is that if you don't have papers that show you're a resident or citizen it can mean that even within places that offer free services, it may still not be accessible to you based on your lack of status. Most counselling or psychotherapy services require status. In my experience, people without status are the ones who are amongst the most vulnerable because they live with fear. Refugee claimants often have less opportunities to access therapy because there are not many that will take on those with pending status and there are very few places that offer these kinds of services for free. So you can imagine how difficult that can be for some of the most vulnerable in our society.

C: Thank you for sharing your time and expertise. As a final question can you give me an example where you've seen Psychotherapy change someone's life in a positive way?

S: Well, I work with many refugee claimants. I often work with them when they are in the process of making their claim and presenting it for the government to review. Many have come from countries or situations where they have suffered violence, rape, kidnapping or another form of serious trauma and I work with these individuals or families to process this trauma and pain using a variety of methods. Often when working with them I realize that they have not told their full story to the refugee board. Trauma works in such a way in terms of how or if you tell your story and can even affect your memory. Often refugees are hesitant to tell these painful or difficult stories to the Refugee Board. Psychotherapy can help individuals to process what happened to them in a way which then allows them to tell their stories and advocate for themselves.

To be able to do this through their own insight and understanding of their emotions and themselves makes a huge difference in court! We are so thankful to be able to offer this service to those that truly need it. It's amazing to see lives being transformed!

Easter Food Drive

The Lighthouse food bank serves approximately 70 households each week, who face serious challenges to feed themselves and their families.

We are reaching out to churches and communities to consider hosting a food drive for The Lighthouse Food Bank as we seek to meet a rise in clients.

Items we are in Short supply of::

Canned meat

Canned soups or stews

Tea/Instant Coffee

Feminine hygiene products

Condiments (honey, peanut butter)

Spices to cook with

Cooking Oil

Personal hygiene products (soap, shampoo,



From Rob's Desk

For the past number of years, The Lighthouse Neighbourhood Ministry has been blessed with the assistance of placement students. Many placements students attend local colleges and universities while some attend universities or colleges not located in the Toronto area. Most of the placements student help The Lighthouse for 200 hours per semester. Some students assist The Lighthouse for one semester and others assist The Lighthouse for two semesters.



This winter semester, The Neighbourhood Ministry had five placement students. Chris and Jordan come in on Mondays and Tuesdays to help set the Food bank each week and help give out food to the clients. Luz Angelica comes 5 days a week. She was here for two months and she helps prepare for the food-bank and meal program. Luz, along with two other students also got the chance to develop a Wellness Program for clients on Thursdays. On Wednesdays and Thursdays, Dorinda and Tara assist The Lighthouse with the food bank program and currently with our income tax clinic. Dorinda, Tara and Luz Angelica worked together planning a six-week Wellness Workshop for clients.

We at The Lighthouse encourage placements students to use their skills and provide insight into how the Neighbourhood Ministry can be more effective. We have been blessed with their approach to making The Lighthouse a better place. It brings great joy to the staff as we help prepare, supervise and mentor these placements students for the future.

We are thankful for the placement students along with all the volunteers who make The Lighthouse a better place. As the placement students and volunteers are making an impact of the lives many who come to The Lighthouse, you also can make an impact on those The Lighthouse assists. You can make a difference by making a donation or placing The Lighthouse as a charity child in your

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Expiry Date _____

Name _____

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Other Ways to Help-Contact us for details

- ☐ PAR (PreAuthorized Remittance)
- ☐ Monthly Visa or MasterCard donation - makes it easy for you and for us
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