

Mindfulness



Tori Nelson

As the last days of my internship here at BHRS are quickly approaching, I have been reflecting upon this one phrase that I have often heard and often questioned “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” Thinking back to all of the experiences that I have had and all the skills that I have learned, I have come to realize the importance of that one phrase. From a broader perspective, the world that we live in is often divided into mutually exclusive and clear cut categories where individuals are categorized based upon a number of different perceived and/or real traits and characteristics. However, by categorizing individuals solely by, let’s say culture, race, age, gender or even by illness and disease, we are not being mindful of the person as a whole.

My experience as a Health Equity Initiatives Intern has taught me a very valuable yet basic life skill, mindfulness. Whether it be drafting mission and vision statements, working with the different health equity initiatives, doing research, or simply communicat-

ing with co-workers, I have learned that one of the only ways to breakdown those mutually exclusive and clear cut categories mentioned above, is to be mindful. To most, myself included, being mindful is something that seems routine and habitual; however, I have learned that being mindful requires one to be attentive and aware of the impact of one’s actions and words. Most of us do not take the time to stop and think about whether our actions or words are mindful of the person or group of people that we are communicating with or advocating for.

After speaking with and listening to consumers and family members in the NAMI Provider Education Course, I have learned that mindfulness (especially in terms of the categorical language that is often used in clinical settings) can breakdown many of the barriers and labels that are placed upon individuals with mental illnesses, alcohol and drug addictions, and co-occurring disorders. Language is very powerful and it is important to be mindful of how language can indirectly cate-

gorize and label an individual. For example, in clinical settings it is fairly common to hear phrases such as “He’s a schizophrenic” or “She’s a manic depressive.” It is very easy to place such labels on someone, and I myself am guilty for labeling people in such ways. Throughout the NAMI provider course and all my experiences in BHRS, I have learned that such language can be hurtful and insensitive when interacting with not only clients, but everyday people as well. The slightest language change from labeling a person as a “schizophrenic” to an individual “who has schizophrenia,” requires one to be mindful of the negative impacts that language can cause. Although an individual might be diagnosed with schizophrenia they may also be a mother or father, daughter or son, an athlete or an artist, a Christian or Buddhist or anything and everything in between. By categorizing individuals by their illness or disease, other *parts* of the individual are not taken into account...*parts* that make up the greater whole. ☺

PRIDE Initiative

Individuals who are concerned about the well-being of the LGBTQQI community in San Mateo County are invited to attend the next PRIDE Initiative meeting:

**Thursday,
August 19th**
11:30 am - 1:00 pm
East Palo Alto

For meeting location details, contact Luna Calderon:

LCalderon@co.sanmateo.ca.us.

PRIDE Initiative Partners with CIP to List Resources for LGBTQQI Community

Over the next year, the PRIDE Initiative will be partnering with the Peninsula Library’s Community Information Program, also known as CIP, to create a topical flier listing resources for the LGBTQQI community in San Mateo County.

CIP is a wonderful resource, that offers many services to assist the community in making informed decisions. Many of CIP’s services are offered free of charge including:

- CIP Calendar of Ongoing Events
- CIP Community Calendar
- CIP Orientation to Community Resources
- Mailing Labels
- Custom Searches
- Demographic Data

For more information regarding CIP please go to their web site at:

<http://cip.plsinfo.org/index.htm>.
A complete list of CIP’s topical fliers can be found at:

<http://cip.plsinfo.org/flyers.htm>.

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