

Conejo Valley
Mental Health



Professionals
Association

The Conejo Connection

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From the Editor

Cynthia Horacek, MFT

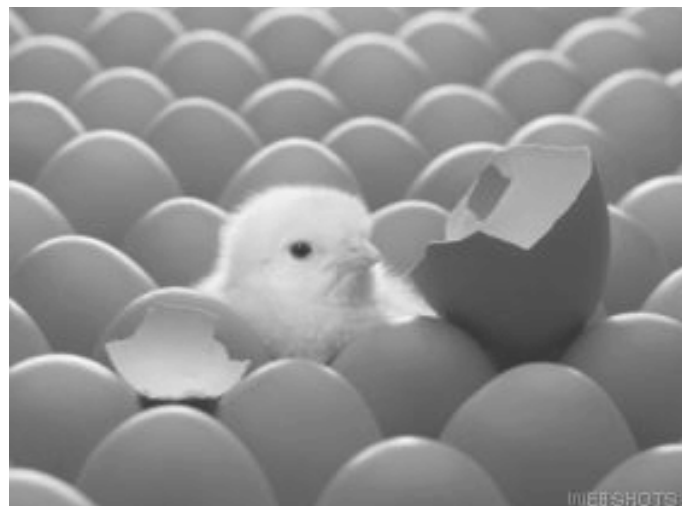
Well, Spring has Sprung (aren't I original?) and everywhere I go, I see birds in pairs, and one of them usually has some sort of nesting material in it's beak—a twig, some string or something that would make a good nest. This morning I watched the finches return to my neighbor's backyard overhang—there is an opening in a metal support beam, and the finches have nested there for several years. My yard is blooming, the Birch tree has sprouted about a million new leaves and the roses are bushy after pruning and ready to bloom. It seems that Spring really is a time of renewal, at least in nature.

How many of us take the time to renew and refresh our own spirit, and our client's spirit's? I believe that this should not happen just in the spring, but all year round. And I do believe that most, if not all, of us do consider our client's spirits all year around, but we tend to neglect our own. The current trend in psychotherapy seems to be incorporating the spiritual into therapy—whether it be a particular religious approach, a more New Age type of approach or simply recognizing the individual, internal spirit that everyone of us, and our clients, bring to the therapeutic space. But if we are feeling stuck in our own stuff, and in our own space, what kind of space can we provide our clients? I suggest we all go out a play—whether it be gardening in the yard, going to beach, playing with our kids and or our friend's kids—however you play, be sure to take the time to do it! Go to Disneyland—without the kids! Go take a day with your partner

or friends and leave your watch at home; take a hike, walk in the park—enjoy your favorite hobby. Whatever you do to play, just do it! (Again, originality.....).

One of the things I really like about editing the newsletter is that I get to sound off at least four times a year, and I have a captive audience! If you'd like to sound off, I'll review it for printing in the newsletter! I think we should have a "letters to the editor" column! What do you think? Let me know! Email me at crhorac@pacbell.net. I want to hear from you!

Have a great spring and a wonderful summer, and we'll see you again in the Fall.



DID YOU MISS THIS?
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SEMINAR
Linda M. Lower, MFT

With family violence clearly on the rise and mental health professionals mandated to obtain continuing education credits in the assessment and treatment of Domestic Violence, more than sixty MFTs, LCSWs and Psychologists gathered at Sherwood Country Club on Saturday, February 21, to participate in a training conducted by Dr. Michele Harway. A psychologist on the faculty at Antioch University in Santa Barbara and co-author with Marsali Hansen of Spouse Abuse: Assessing and Treating Battered Women, Batterers and their Children, Dr. Harway interspersed her fast-paced presentation with anecdotal highlights, audience participation and video clips from a male batterers' group.

With statistical data suggesting that family violence is evident among both heterosexual and gay and lesbian couples, Dr. Harway stated that many well-trained therapists do not adequately assess for domestic violence. Couples entering therapy with typical complaints of "failure to communicate" or "not getting along" may, in fact, be experiencing a verbally or physically abusive relationship. She highlighted the verbal and non-verbal cues indicative of domestic violence but cautioned those in attendance to avoid stereotypes, explaining that while the vast majority of victims are women, men may also be victims.

She stressed that couple counseling is inadvisable in abusive relationships since it reinforces the victim's mistaken belief that she/he is to blame for the violence. Her suggested protocol for the initial assessment is to interview partners separately using what she termed her "freeze frame" approach to discussing a typical disagreement. Walking clients independently through their latest argument with a "she said, he said, then he did" approach, provides the opportunity to recognize family violence that may otherwise be minimized or discounted.

Throughout the seminar, Dr. Harway emphasized that violent couples often love each other and the victim does not always want to leave her spouse. She wants the abuse to stop. One particularly disturbing statistic was that victims leave and return an average of eight times before finally leaving the abuser. It thus becomes imperative for therapists to assist victims in abusive relationships in developing and practicing a safety management plan to protect them when the relationship turns violent.

Dr. Harway's excellent workshop provided participants with valuable diagnostic and treatment tools as well as a heightened awareness of the growing phenomenon of family violence. Thank you, Dr. Harway.

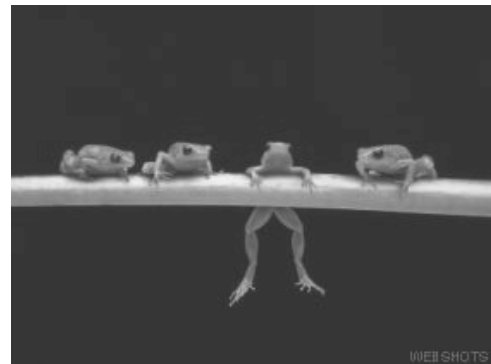
When Helping doesn't Help: A Parable
Author Unknown

A man found a cocoon of an emperor moth. He took it home so that he could watch the moth come out of the cocoon. On the day that a small opening appeared, he sat and watched the moth for several hours as the moth struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could go, and could go no further. It just seemed to be stuck. The man, in kindness, decided to help the moth, so he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The moth then emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the moth because he expected that at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which contract in time.

Neither happened! In fact, the little moth spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never did fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the moth to get through the tiny opening were a way of forcing fluid from the body of the moth into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon. Freedom and flight would only come after the struggle. By depriving the moth of a struggle, he deprived the moth of health.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If we are allowed to go through our life without any obstacles, it would cripple us. When we go through the struggle, we come out stronger for it.



Sometimes we could all use a helping hand.....

Save the Date!

September 17	State of Mental Health in the Conejo Valley
November 19	Overview of Psychopharmacology: Presented by Daryl Westerback, M.D.
January 28, 2005	Therapeutic Approaches to PTSD: Presented by Cynthia Horacek, M.F.T. and Daryl Westerback, M.D.
February 26, 2005	Continuing Education Program: Aging
March 18, 2005	To Be Announced
Sept 23, 2005	State of Mental Health
November 18 2005	To Be Announced
January 27, 2006	To Be Announced

Are you a member with a program you would like to present? Contact Daryl Westerback, M.D. at (818) 879-8857 or Howard Levitt, M.F.T. at (805) 495 - 0375

Classified Ads

AGOURA HILLS: Offices in small counseling suite w/ waiting room, call lights and well-lit open parking located near 101 Fwy. Available by blocks or day. Call Carol (818) 773-3383.

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