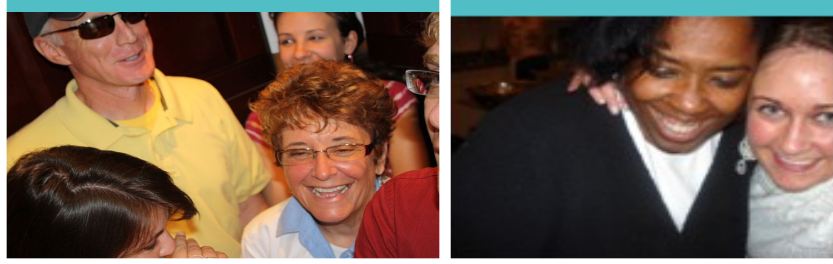




American Foundation of  
Counseling Services, Inc.



# Conversations

with AFCS

integrating mind, body, and spirit



Bob Johnson, LCSW

Director of AFCS

Bob is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, as well as a Certified Clergy Coach, and has significant training and experience in clergy, congregational and denominational consultation. He also holds a state certificate in divorce mediation. Bob has worked in the Behavioral Health and Consultation field for over 30 years.

## Our Mission:

Acting with justice, Loving tenderly, Serving one another, and walking humbly in faith.

(Adapted from Micah 6:8)

American Foundation of Counseling Services promotes optimal mental health by providing counseling, education, consultation, foster care, and relationship-building services.

## It's Just not Enough

"Are you ready to go?" In the summer of my 11<sup>th</sup> year those words were music to my ears. After four girls I was my Dad's first and oldest son. In the summer between fifth and six grades I graduated to being Dad's companion going down to the bank with him on Saturday mornings, and then off to the golf course in the afternoons. It was an opportunity for adventures, discoveries, and play with this man who I both admired and found mysterious at the same time. For my Dad it was his time to begin to teach me the lessons of life, none of which were more important that summer than the proper way to introduce myself to his friends and professional colleagues. It was a lesson I dreaded.

For Dad, doing an introduction between gentlemen was the first important lesson of manhood. Doing it correctly required four essential steps. When I was introduced, I was then to step forward, confidently extend my hand, give the gentleman a firm handshake, all the while looking him directly in the eye. While I loved being with Dad and would count the days down until Saturday arrived, I was equally determined to avoid these encounters with these tall strangers. No matter how on guard I was, Dad always seemed to frustrate my efforts at diversion and escape. The worst moments were the days when Dad was wearing his stickler personality and if he thought I missed a step would make me start over.

One day, in a burst of courage I didn't recognize, I told him the whole thing was just silly. Why couldn't I just wave like the other kids? If I did have to shake hands what was the point of the

'firm' handshake. How could a kid really pull off a firm handshake with men twice his size? And if you insist on all the other parts couldn't I please take a pass on the horrible "directly looking them in the eye" part?

Dad smiled, laughed and sat me down. He explained that as hard as this might seem in the moment I would come to appreciate that all four parts were essential to making a good impression and leaving one out was simply not enough. "Stepping forward and extending your hand lets the person know you are glad to meet them. You give a firm handshake to tell the person you are reliable. You look the person directly in the eye to let them know that you are proud of who you are and can be trusted."

So too at AFCS do we believe that to enable and equip adults, children and families to live joyful, productive and abundant lives it is not enough just to focus on their mental health. We must also integrate each person's physical and spiritual health into our work. This is the core principle which led George Kress and Norman Vincent Peale to establish AFCS 45 years ago. It is a demanding principle requiring daily dedication and discipline. It is a uniquely rewarding principle when the person across from us realizes, often for the first time, that their whole person will be affirmed, honored and blessed.

Welcome to AFCS, It will be our privilege to be a companion on your journey to mental, physical and spiritual health.

Written by: Bob Johnson



issue 1, volume 1, Oct. 2010

Twice yearly newsletter

# Stressful Living:

the effects on the mind and body

# The Balancing Act:

juggling between stress and spirituality

Just recently our family returned from another camping trip, and although it was a great time, it was a lot of work. There was the getting ready before, keeping busy during and unpacking after. While there – in the throws of heat, mud and never-ending bug spray - I wondered, “why do I enjoy this so much and look forward to it every time we go?”

After some contemplation, I decided it is because it takes me back to a simpler time – one free of errands, phone calls, TV shows and computers. We simply spend time together and notice things like sunsets and stars – things that get lost in our busy lives.

It seems these things – things that make us happy – are the things that get left behind in our world of “busyness”. They are replaced with chores, errands and work. So... how do we get the most out of our lives when we will always have these other things that need to be done?

What is important to individuals varies from person to person. However, when someone is not finding time to enjoy the pleasurable things in life, the world can become increasingly stressful. This can have detrimental effects on both one’s mind and body.

Everyone will experience stress in their lives. Stress comes from many different sources, and we all react differently. Reacting to stress is not necessarily bad. It is only when we begin to develop ongoing symptoms that there may be a need for concern. Some signs and symptoms to watch for include:

#### Emotional effects:

Lack of interest  
Irritability  
Feelings of depression  
Crying  
Trouble concentrating  
Temper outbursts

#### Physical effects:

Upset stomach/stomach aches  
Headaches  
Backaches  
Neckaches  
Problems sleeping  
Overeating  
Hives/Rash  
Diarrhea  
Shallow breathing  
Increase in alcohol use  
Increase in tobacco use

Learning to deal with stress before you develop symptoms can keep you healthy, both mentally and physically. Practicing some form of stress management daily cuts down the likelihood that you will develop more serious symptoms.

Start to identify the steps that you take to deal with difficult situations. On the next page are some Top 10 ideas that may help you get started. You probably have a number of coping mechanisms that you already use. Remember the importance of taking time to enjoy the things you value. This can include looking at the sunset, having coffee with a friend, taking a walk, or playing a game with your child. These simple things are important for you – your mind & body.

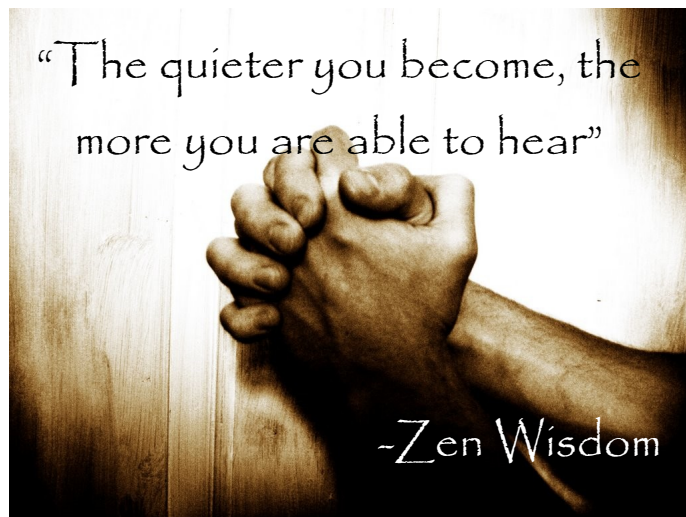
Written by: Vickie Patterson  
staff

For the past couple of months I have found that my life has become a giant balancing act. When I think about my commitments whether professionally, academically, or personally I start to feel overwhelmed and out of balance. All too often I find myself thinking, “I wish there was another hour in a day,” or, “If only I could be in two places at once.” It’s easy to fall into a trap of filling up our lives with an uncontrollable amount of responsibility and commitment with no exit strategy. I have been there many times, as I believe most of us have.

Spirituality, though not the most recognized anti-stress mechanism, boasts a strong healing ability. This can be identified as taking the time to pray or practice your preferred religion or spiritual act, attending a mass or church service, or simply taking a moment to appreciate the divine in everyday life. Take the time to go ‘back to the basics’ and quiet yourself. Focus on your breathing and turn your attention inward. What do YOU need? Could it be that you need time to contemplate? Time to pray? Time to reorganize some priorities? Remember what it is that makes you feel most spiritually awakened. Think about your passions, your gifts, your friends and family. Reflect on who and what you love and why. Contemplate the things that humble you. Finally, think about *why* you are doing this, focus on your needs, accomplishments, and goals.

De-stressing your life through means of spiritual renewal may be an uncomfortable idea for some. That is OK! Challenge yourself to step out of your comfort zone, and recognize that great amounts of spiritual connectedness and growth can occur from challenge. Spend 3-4 times a week quieting yourself and familiarizing yourself with silence and grace. Centering yourself spiritually can be the key to successfully balancing all of life’s components, not just the stressors.

Written by: Kevin Funk  
intern





Each summer, AFCS runs a program entitled Camp Kare for children in the agency's Treatment Foster Care Program. Staff focus on enhancing each child's social and independent/transitional living skills, as well as providing a fun, safe and productive summer vacation.

Camp Kare 2010 conducted a "real life simulation" in which each child began learning how to manage his or her life by getting a hypothetical apartment, education, job and mode of transportation on Kare Island. Below is the scenario that each child was given:

Each child was told that they recently graduated from high school and moved to Kare Island. They were "given" a grant of \$1,500 and had to begin life as an independent adult. Over the summer each had to find an apartment, find a job, decide on transportation options, as well as decide whether or not they were going to enroll in Kare Island University or Kare Island Technical College. Each of these involved budgeting skills, decision-making skills and real life choices.

In addition to getting settled with the above, each day during the summer every child had to draw a "life event card". The life event cards represented something unexpected that happened in their lives – having either a positive or negative effect.

Needless to say, there was much learning and excitement that took place over the summer at Camp Kare! Best of all, many foster children moved one step closer to being prepared for independent living.

Every child has potential; we can help them build it and be successful. Programs like Camp Kare help – below are ways that *you* can support foster children moving toward independence by:

- Volunteering as a mentor for foster youth
- Purchasing gift cards at department stores for use in purchasing household items (sheets, pillows, etc.).
- Providing employment opportunities for foster youth
- Providing transportation to foster youth
- Monetary donations can also be made

If you are interested in getting involved in the above activities and the Foster Care program, please contact Rebecca Zeismer at 617-6759 or [rzeismer@afcscounseling.org](mailto:rzeismer@afcscounseling.org).

\* Source: 2006 report from Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago titled: *Midwest evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth from WI: outcomes at 19.*



For more information on how to support programming at AFCS please contact Vickie Patterson, at (920) 437-8256 or [vpatterson@afcscounseling.org](mailto:vpatterson@afcscounseling.org) or simply complete and send the enclosed donation envelope.

### Fast Facts\*

- Nationally, less than 1 in 5 youth are completely self-sufficient when they leave foster care

- Nationally, 2-4 years after leaving foster care, only 1/2 of all youth were regularly employed and 1/4 had been homeless

**1** Be Realistic. There are only 24 hours in a day. Review your "To Do" list. Determine the realistic amount of time to do the tasks, pad the time to allow for the unexpected, and cross several items off. It is better to feel good about accomplishing what you did than criticizing yourself for what you didn't accomplish.

**2** Practice Good Physical Health Habits. Adequate rest, healthy eating, and regular exercise are natural stress and anxiety reducers.

**3** Attitude is Everything! Your perspective can make a world of difference in how you feel. Focusing on the negative will make you feel worse than trying to take things in stride. "Coach" yourself through rough times. For example, "I made it through tough times before, and I can do it again."

**4** Talk to Someone. While that person may not be able to solve the problem, you may gain a new perspective or get the problem "off your chest". If you don't have someone to talk to, try writing about your feelings.

**5** Take Time to Breathe. Taking slow deep breaths and blowing out the tension will settle your body. It helps slow your mind down so you don't add to stress, anxiety, and panic.

**6** Examine Expectations. Are you somebody who expects perfection? Are you harder on yourself than anybody else? It may be time to take pressure off yourself and realize you aren't failing.

**7** Find Relaxation Time in Every Day. Even a half hour doing something you enjoy will feel satisfying and avoid feelings of resentment.

**8** Take Time to Play. Kids do, so why shouldn't adults? Doing fun activities will help you escape the complications of life—and you might enjoy yourself!

**9** Be Proactive about Solving Problems. While you may want to avoid them, it will be less stressful to look for solutions. Keep an open mind.

**10** Laugh, Laugh, Laugh—Until It Hurts! A sense of humor makes everything easier.

Written by: Elaine Schoerj  
staff





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Ethics in Business Awards Luncheon – November 11, 2010;  
from 11:30-1:10. For more information or to reserve seats  
call Annah at (920) 437-8256 or email

[aholstead@afscounseling.org](mailto:aholstead@afscounseling.org).

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## Upcoming Events:

### Groups

**Self-Esteem/Social Skills Group  
for 6-8 year olds**  
—6 sessions—  
11/16 · 11/23 · 11/30 · 12/7 · 12/14 ·  
12/21

**Self-Esteem/Social Skills Group  
for 9-12 year olds**  
—6 sessions—  
10/5 · 10/12 · 10/19 · 10/26 · 11/2 ·  
11/9

**Adult's Affected by Asperger's  
Group**  
—8 sessions—  
10/6 · 10/20 · 11/3 · 11/17 · 12/1 ·  
12/15 · 12/29 · 1/12/11

**Please call for information on when the  
following groups will be held:**

- DBT for Adults
- Anxiety Management Group
- Integration of Spirituality & Psychotherapy—  
professional workshop

