



Progoff™ Wellness Newsletter

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Kristen Dagradi, Editor

Jonathan Progoff, Director, Dialogue House

Dear Friend:

Wellness can take many forms for different people and the *Intensive Journal* program can serve these needs. Patient wellness and employee wellness are two prime examples.

Further, nurses and therapists require techniques for wellness, both for their own needs as professionals and to be of service to their clientele. This is one of many reasons why Dialogue House, as the headquarters for the *Intensive Journal* program, is approved to offer continuing education programs to them.

The workshops at Sibley Memorial Hospital ("Sibley") demonstrate the significant ways that many different populations, whether staff or patients, can participate in the same *Intensive Journal* program and benefit. Similarly, the

Intensive Journal workshop for a diverse group of employees at The World Bank described below shows other possibilities in terms of employee wellness.

We wish to thank Julie Potter at Sibley and Cheri Bennett at The World Bank for their dedication in organizing these programs.

Dialogue House is seeking to build upon the pilot workshops that are discussed in this newsletter. If you are connected with a suitable organization, I welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can work together.

Best regards,

Jonathan Progoff
Director, Dialogue House

Serving the Health Care Community: the *Intensive Journal*® Series at Sibley Memorial Hospital

Sibley Memorial Hospital, a community hospital in the District of Columbia, sponsored a two-part *Intensive Journal* workshop series on May 30-31 and July 24-25, 2008. Coordinated by the Sibley Senior Association and Pastoral Care Department, the workshop audience also included nursing and therapy staff who received continuing education credits, and patients and their families from other areas of the hospital such as bereavement (Widowed Person Outreach) and Oncology Support. The general public was invited to participate.

Julie Potter, Coordinator of the Sibley Senior Association, who brought the *Intensive Journal* program to the hospital following her positive workshop experience stated: "When I took my first workshop, I felt inspired and empowered. It was a gift to be used in my everyday life." Potter saw the method's applicability to the health care setting for its personnel and patients: "I feel a hospital is an ideal setting given the busy and stressful environment where people may be in a state of crisis."

The workshop was well received by the workshop participants, according to Potter. *Intensive*

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Journal workshops can be conducted for participants with diverse backgrounds, because, as Rev. John McMurry, the workshop leader, states: "The program itself has no content. It is a unique non-analytical method which each participant uses to work with the meaningful contents of one's own personal life and work."

A review of the groups who participated in the program follows:

Continuing Education: Nurses & Therapists

Dialogue House Associates is an approved provider of continuing education in counseling, employee assistance and social work and its twelve hour workshops are approved in the field of nursing.

Nurses

Nurses can use the method to address some of the major issues and challenges in the workplace such as coping with stress, preventing burnout, dealing with diverse personnel, and developing a more meaningful career. Anne Henry, RN, found the workshop both relevant and helpful for dealing with the pressures of nursing:

"Nurses are care-givers who can become very fatigued from lack of self care. This experiential workshop helps nurses put their lives in perspective and find in them some deeper meaning. It is an experience all nurses should give themselves -- a gift for the soul."

"I was surprised to discover the difference that Progoff's structured method can make in self-discovery."

Nancy Clifford, RN, agrees. "We learn so much from our patients and reflecting on these feelings can be very helpful. The *Intensive Journal* method provides the tools to discover those deep feelings and stay on the path of self-understanding. It assists in stress reduction and keeping focused."

Therapists

The *Intensive Journal* method provides therapists with a cost-effective means of helping groups served by a hospital. A psychologist from Sibley stated that, "The *Intensive Journal* program is an intervention tool that can be used with specific populations." The *Intensive Journal* method has been used to complement the therapy process by giving patients a way to become more involved in their development, thereby lowering the cost and duration of therapy.

The *Intensive Journal* method is a psychological tool that implements Ira Progoff's theories of

"After being diagnosed with cancer,... I'm working my way back into life. This workshop was an excellent tool to help focus my thoughts."

self-development which can surprise participants in terms of its power and effectiveness. Debra Turkat, MSW, stated that "I was surprised to discover the difference that Progoff's structured method can make in self-discovery."

Pastoral Care

The *Intensive Journal* method can be used as a tool to help chaplains be more effective. Reverend James Nenninger, the Director of Pastoral Care, stated that "The *Intensive Journal* workshop opened up a whole new way to explore my inner self. The process led me to making connections and integrating myself in astounding ways." The *Intensive Journal* method can also be very beneficial in helping interns in clinical pastoral education programs. Nenninger, who served as a clinical pastoral education supervisor, states "I highly recommend the *Intensive Journal* workshop to students and those involved with one-on-one work in caring for people."

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Sibley Memorial Hospital - continued

Senior Citizens

The *Intensive Journal* program can help senior citizens deal with important issues such as life review and issues of health and dying. In his book, *Reminiscence and the Self in Old Age*, Professor Edmund Sherman finds that the *Intensive Journal* method is so effective because it “helps people fix experience, without regard to grammar or spelling, in visible words that can be read, re-experienced, and thought about further.[1]” A senior citizen at Sibley stated that, “The use of the *Intensive Journal* enables me to examine my life and feelings privately and in more depth than by just thinking about them without structure. For me, it is a way towards equanimity.”

Oncology Support

Dealing with the physical and emotional consequences of having a fatal illness such as cancer can be a great challenge for both patients and family members. A workshop participant found her *Intensive Journal* experience helpful: “After being diagnosed with cancer, having two mastectomies and several therapies later, I’m working my way back into life. This workshop was an excellent tool to help focus my thoughts.”

Nancy Clifford, RN, who works in the oncology unit, believes the *Intensive Journal* program will be helpful for cancer patients and their families. Nancy commented:

“It can help them deal with such issues as mortality, meaning in life, and how best to live the rest of their lives with the reality of cancer. The *Intensive Journal* method with its structured way of peeling back the layers can help bring healing and answers to these feelings. It can facilitate patients and their families staying focused and getting through a very difficult time.”

Bereavement

Ira Progoff, PhD, was fond of emphasizing a line from the motion picture *I Never Sang for My Father* that “Death ends a life, but it does not end a relationship.[2]” Progoff believed that relationships have a life of their own and that they “carry

potentialities which press us from within until, either inwardly or outwardly, they are resolved or fulfilled or completed.” A workshop attendee found Progoff’s process helpful: “The program has helped me to emotionally deal with the passing of friends...”

“Death ends a life,
but it does not end a relationship.”

The *Intensive Journal* method offers workshop participants the chance to address issues that arise from the loss of a loved one. Mary Carol Dragoo stated that “I used the workshop to look at my past as well as my new status as a widow. It helped me to answer the questions of who I am now, what I want to do, where I want to live, and how it is to live as a single person after 45 years of marriage.”

Conclusion

The *Intensive Journal* program has great potential as a resource in the health care environment. According to Potter, “Health care professionals and the community they serve can benefit, enhancing the care that is given and received and in helping professionals in their career decisions.”

[1] Edmund Sherman, Ph.D. (1991) *Reminiscence and the Self in Old Age*. New York: Springer Pub Co, p. 232.

[2] Ira Progoff, Ph.D., *At a Journal Workshop*, New York: Tarcher/Putnam, Rev.ed (1992), p.130, quoting, Anderson, Robert (Screenplay), & Cates, Gilbert (Director).(1970) *I Never Sang for My Father*. [Motion Picture]. New York, NY: Columbia Pictures Corporation.

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Wellness in the Workplace: the *Intensive Journal*® Workshop at The World Bank

by Kristen Dagradi

On a daily basis, employees deal with the fast-paced work environment that challenges them constantly. These challenges can lead to stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction. So what options do employers have when it comes making sure their employees are satisfied within their work environment? The *Intensive Journal* method is one such instrument that can be used to counter such issues.

On April 23-25, 2008, The World Bank, a provider of financial and technical aid to developing countries, held an *Intensive Journal* program for its employees in the District of Columbia. The twelve-hour program was spread over three days (four hours per day) to accommodate employees' work schedules.

Nancy-Elizabeth Nimmich, LCSW, who led the workshop, found the participants to be highly engaged in the *Intensive Journal* process. Nimmich said: "They asked many thoughtful questions during the course of the workshop, which indicated their desire to effectively use the process both in their personal and professional lives."

Attendees were a diversified group in terms of their age and profession, including administration, communications and finance. The reason for attending also varied, but central themes were to gain self-understanding about their thoughts, feelings and direction in life, to improve themselves, and to increase creativity.

Benefit Employer and Employees

"Employee Wellness benefits the employer as much as the employee" according to Sharon Puckett, Senior Information Officer at The World Bank. Puckett adds: "Staff who are self-motivated, clear about what they have to offer, and attuned to their creativity, bring enormous value to the organization and the people with whom they work."

As a tool for self-development, the *Intensive Journal* program helps employees to reflect on their lives, work on self-improvement, learn a method to use throughout life and nurture creativity. Nimmich stated that "While working as an Employee Assistance Counselor, I have witnessed breakthroughs in the personal development of employees that would free up energy, making for increased creativity and lowered stress in the workplace. The World Bank participants shared these types of breakthroughs as they worked with the *Intensive Journal* method."

Gain Self-Understanding

The workplace can be a stressful environment for employees, compounded by the pressures of personal life. The *Intensive Journal* method provides a means for self-understanding and for coping with life's challenges.

Thelma Jones found the method helpful in dealing with her rare form of breast cancer: "The *Intensive Journal* method seemed to be therapeutic and did wonders in lifting my spirits and reminding me of how far I have come on the treatment process." Economist Inessa Love stated that the workshop helped her "gain clarity about where I am in the bigger context of my life, not just managing day-to-day things, as is usually the case. I got some insights and some practical tools to continue the practice on my own."

Use an Integrated Holistic Approach

The *Intensive Journal* method can help employees view issues from different perspectives, make connections, and deal with the pressures of everyday life. Through the use of the method, employees can work through challenges that come their way as well as gain greater control

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A Tool for the Modern-Day Nurse: *the Intensive Journal*[®] Method

by Kristen Dagradi

What could help nurses deal with the challenges they face everyday in the workplace? The *Intensive Journal* method is one such tool and Dialogue House is now approved to offer continuing education credit to nurses.

The *Intensive Journal* program offers nurses a valuable tool to develop professionally. Nurses can use the method to address some of the major issues and challenges in the workplace such as coping with stress, preventing burnout, dealing with diverse personnel, and developing a more meaningful career.

Dialogue House has been approved by the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA). Because the NYSNA is accredited by the American Nursing Association (ANA), this approval is recognized in 48 states.[1] Also, Dialogue House is an approved provider of continuing education for nurses in California. [2]

Reduce Stress

The ANA recognizes the great problem of stress that nurses face in the workplace. According to a recent ANA study, it was found that:

“The stress, danger, exhaustion, and frustration that have become built into the normal daily routine of hospital nurses constitute [the] single biggest factor driving nurses out of the industry. (Lafer, [3])”

Thus, the *Intensive Journal* method can help nurses in developing mechanisms to reduce stress by resolving issues, gaining new perspectives, writing thoughts and describing emotions. Charlotte Conway, RN, BS, IBCLC, states that “The method empowers me to positively manage the stressful work environment. I see other perspectives more fully, which helps me to maintain my objectivity and to move forward.”

Prevent Burnout

Intensive Journal workshops can also aid nurses in preventing burnout. The ANA study showed

evidence that “[Due to] the nature of their work, health care professionals are at especially high risk for experiencing the emotional exhaustion component of burnout. [3]”

The *Intensive Journal* method can also help nurses to identify and resolve issues that have created inner conflict and turmoil within the workplace. Moreover, it enables nurses to work through issues by helping them to reconnect with their passion for nursing and to bring renewed energy and focus.

Develop Career Path

The *Intensive Journal* method can help nurses realize the continuity and direction of their career by laying a foundation on their lives and reconnecting with their cumulative work in nursing. Through the use of the method, nurses are better equipped to identify skills and interests to pursue.

A registered nurse from Sibley Memorial Hospital in the District of Columbia, which recently sponsored the *Intensive Journal* program, stated that

“The workshop helped me to make sense out of my life - the joys and challenges. It helped me to understand and clarify the direction I want to be going in.”

The technique of dialogue, which is used extensively in the *Intensive Journal* method, has also been recognized in ANA studies to be an important way in facilitating critical thinking and questioning.

“In dialogue, conversations focus on surfacing assumptions, goals, and values, and summarizing disparate ideas in search of connections. This type of strategic conversation allows for further exploration and clarification of different vantage points, thus allowing for the development of new knowledge...[4]”

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The Modern-Day Nurse - continued

Through this type of dialogue, nurses can gain skills for developing their career path.

Enhance Interpersonal Skills

The ANA has recognized the value of interpersonal skills in the work environment by stating:

“Both interpersonal and organizational skills are needed for successful collaboration. Important interpersonal attributes include ...cooperation and flexibility; self-confidence and assertiveness; patience to listen to one another’s rationale...; and the ability to ...be self-reflective, and convey a value that places the patient and/or community needs above the needs of individual health care team members.[4]”

Increased collaboration can produce many benefits including

“improved patient outcomes, reduced length of stay, cost savings, increased nursing job satisfaction and retention, and improved teamwork.[4]”

The *Intensive Journal* method can help nurses enhance the aforementioned skills in a variety of ways. By working at an inner level as they reflect

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and direction in their lives. Jones stated that “The *Intensive Journal* workshop has helped me to be more introspective while allowing me to reflect on past actions, challenges and achievements which have helped me to add focus to my life as I move forward.”

Stimulate Productivity & Creativity

The *Intensive Journal* program can help employees to stimulate creativity, gain greater focus, and deepen understanding. One employee stated that “The course, its content and its instructor, were fantastic and I was extremely surprised to “click” very quickly and get cranking at writing stories, old memories, etc...that I thought I had long forgotten. I also had some incredible insights, things that were just floating under the surface waiting to come out... It was a fantastic experience!”

on and connect with many facets of their lives, participants learn to trust their hunches and intuition. Nurses learn ways to view issues from another person’s perspective, thereby enhancing their listening skills.

Organize a Workshop

Dialogue House is seeking to organize workshops for nurses at major health care facilities. The workshop schedule can be structured to meet the unique needs of each organization. Contact Jon Progoff at 800-221-5844 for further information.

Footnotes

[1] The NYSNA approval covers the standard workshop format which is the 12 hour version of the three core modules: Life Context, Depth Contact and Life Integration.

[2] State of California Board of Registered Nursing (CEP-15073). All programs are covered regardless of length and module.

[3] Erickson, R., Grove, W., (October 29, 2007). “Why Emotions Matter: Age, Agitation, and Burnout Among Registered Nurses,” *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*. Vol. #13, No. #1, quoting, Lafer, G. (2005), “Hospital speedups and the fiction of a nursing shortage,” *Labor Studies Journal*, 30(4), 27-46.

[4] Gardner, D. (January 31, 2005). “Ten Lessons in Collaboration,” *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*. Vol. #10 No. 1, Manuscript 1.

Puckett concludes “Reconnecting with the inner source of ideas, beliefs and dreams helps one regain a sense of power and purpose that can manifest as a boost in morale, productivity, creativity or increased energy and enthusiasm.”

Develop Career Path

In a fast-changing dynamic workplace, employees must refine and develop new skills over time as a way of staying relevant and productive for an employer. Puckett concludes that the *Intensive Journal* program can help employees in this evolving process by “developing greater self-knowledge about their strengths, values, and goals, taking stock of their work lives, reconnecting with what attracted them to their vocations, and gaining perspective on their careers and the choices they make.” □