

ASSOCIATION OF PRIVATE PRACTICE THERAPISTS

GUT-BRAIN HEALTH

PRESIDENTS
CORNER:

Greetings colleagues!

It has been a very snowy past few weeks, hope you all are staying warm and safe. I will be replacing Craig Caspari this year and next as the new president of APPT. This is a role I very humbly accept, and praise Craig highly for his strong work ethic and excellent job as our president. Please bear with me during this transition, he is much more organized than I am.

We have three new board members with us this year! Please join me in welcoming Mr. Cole Johnson, Ms. Jessica Winterheimer, and Ms. Jumoke Omojola. We have a new role on the board coming up next year, 2020, which is president elect. Jessica has graciously volunteered for that role, and will take over as president after me.

We are looking forward to this coming year full of new social events and exciting training opportunities! Please, as always, let us know if you have an idea for a lunch and learn, social, or

have a topic you would like to present on.

Our new website address is www.apptne.com. We understand the transition to this may take some time and may be confusing. Please let us know if you need any help in navigating this new site or have any questions. There will be some minor changes, and we will let you know for sure what they are in the coming weeks.

A little about me, I have been in private practice, (seriously, all alone) for seven years. I am a certified sex therapist and work with mostly adolescents, adults, and couples. I love what I do, it brings so much joy in my life! I also play hockey in a co-ed rec league, as well as on an all-girl tournament team (we don't win much, but it is so fun!) I am married to my husband Eli and we have 3 crazy active and busy kids, ages 3, 7, and 10. I am excited to take on this new role and to connecting more with others in our field. Enjoy the upcoming, hopefully warmer, weather!



Kellie Willms, LMHP CST
Kaleidoscope Counseling, LLC
President Elect 2019-2020

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Upcoming Event:

March 24, 2019 @4:05 pm

Omaha Lancers Hockey Social

Enjoy the company of colleagues and families while sitting in comfort in the Super Suite. Also included is VIP parking

Cost is \$20 / ticket. Kids 3 and under free

Register online at: apptne.com



TJ Gorman,
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“This is the powerful concept that our brains and digestive tract have the capacity for ongoing bi-directional communication”

Who are the primary providers

This issue is all about the gut—brain connection. We have Josh Friedman with an article on “What every therapist needs to know.” We also have Kim Graham talking as mom about what she and her family have battled with gut—brain issues.

With all of this new information on the Gut-Brain connection circulating about, the question becomes, who do you refer to? What professionals are there? I thought I would take a minute to provide information about

the different professionals.

Functional Medicine—This does not have to be an MD. They rely on lab testing and provide natural health solutions to restore functioning.

Homeopathy—These are physicians who use minerals and natural substances to help the body heal itself.

Nutritionist—These can be certified individuals, however, they do not have

specific education and cannot treat or diagnose illness.

Dietician—Has a bachelors degree and completes an internship and then takes a national license to become a RD (registered dietician). They develop food and nutrition plans to treat illness.

Holistic Health Practitioner—They focus on the whole person: mind, body, and health to make recommendations for treatment and care.

What every therapist needs to know about the gut-brain connection



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If someone asked you to name the most significant development in mental health in the last decade what would you say? It would have to be big. It would have to have the potential to challenge much of what we understand about how mental health symptoms develop, and to increase our ability to help the many “treatment resistant” patients that we see every day.

I know exactly what I would say to that ques-

tion. It would have to be the explosion of knowledge about the gut-brain axis. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gut-brain_axis

This is the powerful concept that our brains and digestive tract have the capacity for ongoing bi-directional communication, and that this communication has everything to do with how our brain functions and whether or not we will develop mental health symptoms.

You might have read that and thought, “but haven’t we known that forever?” What we have known for decades is that our emotions have a direct impact on our guts.

This is true for all of us, but particularly for those with mental health symptoms. Think about your anxious clients who get diarrhea or lose their appetite when their anxiety

What ever therapist needs to know...

gets worse, or the well-established finding that stress can exacerbate Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS).

<https://chriskresser.com/how-stress-wreaks-havoc-on-your-gut/>

But that's not the part of the story that will make headlines.

Gut Instincts

Up until about 5 years ago, suggesting that Gastrointestinal (GI) issues could *cause* mental health symptoms would have made you a laughing stock of your colleagues. I read an article last month in the New York Times entitled "Germs in Your Gut are Talking to Your Brain."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/28/health/microbiome-brain-behavior-dementia.html?fbclid=IwAR3bqEa3p1nZkSACkpoHBt=:dqx260EXrom8cWxbol-uoRPbaVOjLN6Uxrzkz>

It opens with a story about an Irish microbiome expert who presented to a group of Dementia and Alzheimer's researchers in 2014.

He shared the findings of the then most current research on the gut-brain connection, which showed that gut microbes could affect mood by directly communicating with the brain.

The takeaway was that *gut health directly impacts brain health*.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4367209/>

The article notes that his presentation was not well received. He was quoted as saying, "I've never given a talk to so many people who didn't believe what I was saying."

That was less than 5 years ago. Since then, a lot has changed!

Research on the importance of the gut-brain connection seems to be coming out every week, and it's now well accepted that gut issues can lead to brain impairment and mental health symptoms.

The research is still young, and much of it still in animal models, but if what we know now continues to generalize to human populations, we are on our way to a real paradigm shift in mental health. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradigm_shift

The Nervous System and the Vegas Nerve

When most people think of neurons, they think of the brain and its magical ability to influence behavior. The brain has 100 billion neurons that control much of what we think and do.

What most people don't know is that your gut also contains its own nervous system, composed of 100 million neurons, called the Enteric Nervous System (ENS). The ENS is so sophisticated it's been dubbed the "second brain." <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/gut-second-brain/>

Much of the communication between our two "brains" happens via the Vegas Nerve, which is the longest nerve in the Parasympathetic Nervous System. This is the "rest and digest," relaxation part of the nervous system that many psychotherapeutic techniques are designed to activate.

Many studies have shown that stress can travel from the brain to the gut, causing gastrointestinal problems (this would be brain-to-gut communication.) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11297721>

But amazingly, 90% of the signals passing between the brain and gut are generated by gut neurons.

<http://neurosciencestuff.tumblr.com/post/38271759345/gut-instincts-the-secrets-of-your-second-brain>

It's these signals that have the ability to affect our mind and mood.

In fact, it has been shown that signals up the Vegas Nerve (gut-to-brain) can trigger the body's stress response through communication with the Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal axis (HPA), initiating the release of the stress hormones, cortisol and adrenaline. <http://neurosciencestuff.tumblr.com/post/38271759345/gut-instincts-the-secrets-of-your-second-brain>

What every therapist needs to know...

The powerful takeaway here is that inflammation in the GI tract or other gut issues can trigger our “flight/flight” stress response. When this pathway becomes chronic, it can lead to mental health issues including anxiety, depression and PTSD.

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6014/32678081b1fc46ec1838d181c910919dc128.pdf>

This is a very important finding if we are thinking about the etiology and treatment of mental health symptoms. This is evidence that body imbalances (in this case GI issues) can lead to depression and anxiety and other mental health symptoms, suggesting that treatments that involve approaches reaching beyond the manipulation of brain neurotransmitters may improve treatment outcomes.

The Gut Microbiome

Another major player in the gut-brain axis are the microbes that call our large intestines home. Did you know you have ten times more microbes in your gut than you have cells in your body? The diversity and health of these microorganisms can determine much about our overall wellness and even our mental health.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/319161.php>

We mostly live symbiotically with these little critters and through evolution have come to rely on them for our survival. Some of the ways the microbiome helps us with essential bodily functions include aiding in digestion, regulating our immune system, helping to keep disease causing bacteria at bay, producing numerous B vitamins (including B12, thiamine, and riboflavin) and making vitamin K. In fact, we would toast without them. https://depts.washington.edu/ceeh/downloads/FF_Microbiome.pdf

When there are mostly helpful or neutral species of microbes in our gut, and a limited number of “pathogenic species” know to cause illness, we would say that we have a “balanced flora”. “Dysbiosis” refers to the changes in the composition of microorganisms in our gut, so

that disease-producing organisms overpower the more “friendly” microbes.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4143175/>

Inflammation

Unchecked gut dysbiosis and ongoing exposure to the modern gut flora busters, described above, sets the stage for inflammation of the gut lining. One thing that amazed me was finding out that the gut lining is only one cell thick, and this one cell thick barrier may be the most important gatekeeper of the body. Inflammation of the lining of the small intestines (where most nutrients are assimilated) often results in a condition known as Leaky Gut. <https://www.healthywomen.org/content/blog-entry/10-signs-you-have-leaky-gut-and-how-heal-it>

What is Leaky Gut?

It’s a condition where gut barrier breaks down, and allows undigested food particles, pathogens and toxins to enter the body. This flips the immune system into a hyper-alert mode, leading to systemic inflammation, allergenic, and even autoimmune reactions. Some conditions that can be caused by the metabolic fallout of Leaky Gut include: anxiety, depression, migraines, eczema, food allergies and autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis and Hashimoto's thyroid.

The damage to the gut lining in leaky gut leads to nutritional deficiencies caused by poor absorption. When nutrients needed for the production of neurotransmitters (the feel-good chemicals of the brain including serotonin and dopamine) are not available, anxiety and depression can arise. These nutrients include: Zinc, magnesium, specific B vitamins and amino acids.

Leaky Gut, Leaky Brain

Some of the latest research is connecting the presence of a leaky gut with the deterioration of the blood brain barrier (BBB) often referred to as a “leaky brain.” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12529927>

When these two protective barriers (the gut lining and the BBB) break down, our bodies and brain become vulnerable to infection and inflammation, which can lead to symptoms of depression, anxiety, cognitive impairment and brain fog. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

What every therapist needs to know..

Symptoms of Gut/Brain Axis Issues

Now you're a pro in the Gut-Brain axis right? Or at least you know enough to wonder about whether dysbiosis, leaky gut or inflammation may be playing a role in your clients' mental health symptoms. *Here are some common symptoms of GI dysbiosis and/or Leaky gut (remember they usually go hand in hand):* Digestive issues/bloating, Nutritional deficiencies, Food sensitivities, Headaches, brain fog, memory issues, Excessive fatigue. Skin rashes, and problems such as acne, eczema or rosacea. Autoimmune disorders (such as Hashimoto's thyroiditis), Arthritis or joint pain, Bad breath, Vaginal or rectal itching, and of course mental health symptoms including depression, anxiety and ADHD, or mood swings.

How can you help your clients?

The first thing that needs to be said here is about scope of practice. We are therapists and not medical providers, so we need to get clear on what information we're allowed to provide clients. What all of us can do is to get educated (this article is a beginning) and provide our clients with education so that they feel empowered to have informed discussions with their primary care providers. Because some of this information is quite new and it takes over a decade for the latest research to become part of standard medical care, some primary providers will not know, or might actively reject, the information provided here. That said, all people with suspected gut issues should be referred to their primary care providers for work up to identify any major GI issue that needs to be addressed medically.

What Integrative Medicine Has to Offer

Once that is done, here are some integrative medicine tools that I have found to be helpful for gut healing and helping to support the gut-brain axis:

1. *Provide clients education about the benefits of an elimination diet:* This would be a diet that eliminates foods that are known to cause inflammation or allergenic response for a period of time to allow healing of the gut. Most elimination diets restrict gluten, dairy, processed foods, pesticide treated and non-organic foods, sugar, rancid oils and alcohol. I have had good success with the Whole30 whole30.com, which is a 30-day

elimination diet with a structured reintroduction.

2. *Reduce stress:* This one is squarely within our wheelhouse as therapists. Remember that stress can cause both dysbiosis and leaky gut. With daily relaxation we can help our patients heal gut issues contributing to their mental health symptoms. Encourage your clients to find a practice that they can work with daily. I'm sure you have some in your bag of tricks. Several that I find helpful include: Yoga (make sure it's slow and healing yoga and not exercise yoga - have your clients look for a Hatha or Restorative Yoga class which are more mindfulness or relaxation focused) and Heart Math (a very well researched biofeedback tool for increasing heart rate variability which has been shown to decrease stress.)

3. *Healing Nutrients:* Of course this one may be beyond the scope of practice for most therapists, so this is a place to pass information on, that clients can discuss with their medical providers. *Probiotics.* For millennia, traditional cultures have known about the power of fermented foods like sauerkraut or Kimchi for gut healing. Here's an article discussing the power of food-based probiotics. Research has identified several specific probiotic strains (available in capsules) that help heal the gut and balance the microbiome. *These include:* Lactobacillus Casei, Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG, Saccharomyces Boulardii. *Digestive enzymes:* These supplemental digestive aids can help a damaged gut to fully digest foods. This reduces the inflammatory impact of food on the gut lining and decreases the chances that the immune system will overreact to food your clients eat. This decreases the chances for the inflammatory cascade described above to be initiated.

So what now?

If you found this interesting keep on educating yourself about the gut-brain connection. With all the research pouring out, this is just the beginning. Remember, we as therapists are first responders, and the more educated we are, the more we can help our patients. We have to begin to learn when the right intervention is EMDR or CBT, and when the primary therapy needs to address the "second brain." In my experience, treatment is most effective when we are working simultaneously with mind, brain and body. If you are interested



Kim Graham
The Gut Mom

Website: [The Gut Mom](#)

[The Official Site of Isagenix International](#)

“Little did I know, that one sentence would put me on the roller coaster ride of my life.”

One Families Journey to Gut Health

As the plane descended into Dallas it came to me. The Gut Mom. Why? What? It was everything I'd learned up to that point about the connection between our gut, brain and immune system. It was also about me being a mom and pregnant with our 4th child. But ultimately it was because The Gut Mom rhymed with .com. Simple as that. I wanted a vehicle to share the bits and pieces of information I'd learned over the years during our family's journey for better physical and mental health, and a website was the best way to do that.

This door to holistic health originally opened for us in 2010. Our son was running around on a baseball field one second as a typical 8 year old, 24 hours later he was in a hospital bed screaming in pain with a 107 temp and no relief from antibiotics. He had a bacterial infection that was resistant to antibiotics. It was a conversation at 3am with a doctor who said one sentence that changed everything for our family, “80% of our immune system is in our gut”.

Little did I know, that one sentence would put me on a roller coaster ride of my life.

First of all its important to know I'm not against medication. Medicine saved our son's life. What I did learn during that horrific ordeal was that everything we had done up to that point played a role in his inability to fight the infection. Overusing antibiotics, his body overreacting to dairy and wheat. Processed foods and toxins damaging his delicate little gut until one day an opportunistic bacteria recruited every healthy cell he had and it took over his little body. “80% of our immune system is in our gut.” Well, he didn't have much of a good army when the bad army set up shop and took over his little body.

Nutrition. I wish I knew then what I know now. Foods make us sick and foods heal us. Some relieve inflammation, some cause inflammation. We now know to use foods like whey concentrate from grass-fed, hormone-free cows because the fatty acid profile is anti-inflammatory. We use healing nutrients like aloe vera, bacopa, ashwaganda, L- glutamine, spirulina, probiotics and milk thistle to support our liver and heal our gut. We support our adrenals with adaptogenic herbs like eleuthero and rhodiola so our endocrine organs stop pulling on each other and getting worn out. We utilize amino acids like cysteine to increase glutathione so that our bodies are able to eat up the junk that's causing the inflammation in the first place. B vitamins, coQ10, zinc and D3 to support brain health and strengthen the gut-brain connection.

I was a tired mama with adrenal fatigue and a lot of pain 10 years ago. Our son's illness got us on the right path and by the grace of God we found a company 7 years ago that simplified our nutrition with everything I'd just mentioned. Game Changer. I wasn't depressed. I was deficient. We've incorporated whey protein shakes, nightly and monthly cleansing, daily adaptogens, minerals, vitamins, antioxidants and brain support by using products from an 18 year old company called Isagenix. The next step is educating ourselves and our kids, helping them see the connection between what they're eating, and not eating with how they feel mentally and physically.

Once our eyes were opened we were sent to this door, then that door, and another door, and just when we finally feel like we've opened the final door and we're going to get a clear answer, the door closes and we're lead to yet another. My point is, we're all still learning. Nutrition is essential, but we're still learning.

What we do know is whatever it is we are suffering from; be it an infection, or a hormone imbalance, mental illness, infertility, cancer, autoimmune disorders, eating disorders, addiction... trace it back to our gut. Our micro biome runs the show and we're just now figuring out to what degree. You might find a conventional doctor who will agree with this, but if you do it will take several months to get into them. Supply and demand.... the demand for answers is growing. If I've learned anything these past 10 years it's that there is way too much ego getting in the way of finding answers to the problems. Oh, and deductibles, they get in the way, too. Therapists can help a person manage their symptoms and work strategically to support emotional reactions. Medications can help stabilize. Homeopathic medicine can support the body's processes, and nutrients can feed the body exactly what it's been starved of so it can finally do what it was designed to do.

We need all of it. ALL of it. Once everyone starts to work together, to be open about possibilities when other solutions are a dead end, that's when we'll get answers. That's when we'll truly heal. Until then, pay close attention to your gut, it's holding the key to the door of the future of true physical and mental health and wellness.

Upcoming Lunch and Learns:

April 19, 2019
9:00am to 1:30pm
4.0 CEUs

Katie Jensen
Power and Control Paradigm

The Omaha Bakery
608 S. 72nd St.

Cost:
\$60 member
\$75 non-member
Register at <https://apptne.com/>



Association of Private Practice Therapists

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The Association of Private Practice Therapists (APPT) is a multi-disciplinary group of mental health professionals in Nebraska. The organization provides a forum for the exchange of practice management information and the development of advocacy plans for mental health practitioners and consumers.

APPT is the result of grassroots meetings of private practice professionals who were interested in impacting the regulation and legislation of mental health services. At the time the meetings were held in the fall of 1993, 45 participants established the initial organizational structure of APPT. Currently the organization has close to 200 members. Any mental health practitioner in Nebraska is invited and encouraged to join.

We're on the web:
<https://apptne.com/>