

The Genesis Therapy Center

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The Ambivalent Marriage

Naomi Effort MA, LCPC

Merriam Webster defines Ambivalent as “having and showing simultaneous and contradictory attitudes or feelings toward someone or something.” As a couple’s counselor, I often sit with couples who come to counseling looking for support to improve issues in their marriage. Most often, I find there has been ambivalence developing between the partners. In sharing their marriage journey with me, we may walk through a journey of years filled with parenting children, job losses, financial distress, infidelity, health challenges and/or death of loved ones. These kinds of life challenges can increase the absence of accountability and responsibility towards one another. Therefore, the couple will resort to blaming, chastisement and/or constant conflict toward each other. Due to the conflict, couples stop talking about issues and make assumptions about each other which causes emotional distance. Ambivalence develops from the emotional distance and lack of willingness to discuss issues/concerns in the relationship. Some couples believe that without talking, issues will go away on their own. That is far from the truth. Developing better communication skills would open the door to discussions about thoughts and feelings between the couple. It could allow the couple to grow towards one another, instead of away from one another. However, it is imperative for both individuals to be present on their journey to remove ambivalence. I encourage couples to dedicate time to assess, review and discuss their marriage regularly. If making time is difficult, schedule it and hold each other accountable to be present for it. If it becomes too

challenging to do it alone, seek support from a counselor who specializes in working with couples to help develop the proper skills and techniques to improve the ability to successfully discuss issues and challenges with a marriage.

Meet Jessica Krakowski MA, LCPC

Jessica is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor working at our Oak Forest office. She received her Masters Degree in Community Counseling from Argosy University in 2009. Jessica counsels individuals who struggle with transitional issues, adjustment disorders, divorce, grief/loss, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, substance use disorders, as well as those who have been traumatized and abused from childhood into adulthood. She specializes in helping women who have experienced domestic violence and who seek to improve their self-confidence and positive outlook for the future. Jessica believes it is important to provide holistic care for those who struggle with multiple issues and therefore utilizes a combination of therapeutic techniques and coping skills in order to help heal the person.

Elizabeth Lewitke is running an anxiety group for teens at the Oak Lawn Community High School starting Oct 22, 2019. It will be for students of OLCHS. Please call our office at 708-535-7320 if you are interested.

Silencing the Inner Critic

Joleen Hartland MS, LCPC

Your inner critic arrives to protect you from the fear of failure. It often starts from when you feared the rejection or disapproval of caregivers. It tells you that if you work hard enough and become good enough, you will be accepted, you will fit in. It pushes and motivates you to be better.

However, according to psychologist Leon Seltzer of Del Mar, California, your inner critic doesn't allow you to ever stop 'cracking the whip' on yourself for fear that if you don't, the disapproval and rejection that seems imminent will become your reality. It's the perfect setup for anxiety and depression. It can leave you feeling you are an impostor. No matter what success you have, it doesn't feel real.

According to Ethan Kross, of the University of Michigan's Emotion & Self Control Lab, it does not help to try to shut down the critic—it will return no matter how hard you try. It is also not helpful to spend too much time analyzing the feelings, this can leave you ruminating on those feelings and getting stuck in a negative cycle.

He suggests the best intervention may be to respond to these criticisms from a detached perspective—almost as if you were another

person. This is called self-distancing. This involves speaking to yourself in the 3rd person, stepping back and thinking as rationally and clearly as though you were speaking to someone else. Simply noticing that you have the inner critic is itself very helpful. Label the thoughts as coming from your inner critic. When you notice the voice, just say to yourself that is the inner critic again.

It is essential to build compassionate thoughts about yourself. Imagine you are talking to a good friend who is berating themselves. Take time to really think about and identify your strengths. Remind yourself of these strengths when you hear the critical voice. Reinforce and build new positive thoughts about yourself.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/201903/silencing-your-inner-critic>

<https://drlaurencostine.com/useful-tools-for-dealing-with-the-inner-critic/>

Anyone interested in supporting our testing services may make a designated donation to The Genesis Therapy Center and make clear that the amount donated is to go towards providing an assessment service for a child or adolescent. For further information, please contact our Executive Director, Catherine Fairfield, at 708-535-7320, ext. 11.



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Administrative Office
6006 W. 159th Street
Oak Forest, IL 60452

Phone: (708) 535-7320
Fax: (708) 535-7571

We're on the Web!

Visit us at: <http://www.genesistherapy.org>

E-Mail: info@genesistherapy.org

Other Locations:

Schaumburg, IL
930 W. Higgins Rd.

Oak Brook, IL
2625 Butterfield Road,
Suite 138S

LaGrange, IL
14 W. Burlington Ave

Oak Park, IL
1010 Lake Street
Suite 603B

Griffith, IN
223 North Broad St

Oak Lawn, IL
9411 S 51st Ave.

Oak Lawn, IL
5210 W. 95th Street