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The Lytel Letter

A newsletter about my psychotherapy practice as well as some therapeutic ideas for working with families, children, adolescents and adults.

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A Worthwhile, Constructive Life: Navigating Adulthood

I provide psychotherapy for individual adults. I know that this investment in oneself can be thought-provoking, productive and helpful for many men and women. We live in such a noisy, complicated, crazily fast-paced world, and one in which having time to ourselves can be a rare event. One of the comforting and reassuring benefits of individual psychotherapy is the private, quiet nature of the process.

Many adults can benefit from a calm, quiet, focused, exploration of their lives and circumstances. Sometimes looking inward, understanding who you are, or how and why you make choices, can lead to important changes in your life and well-being.

It can be an eye-opening relief to be able to address your own concerns outside of the usual stream of advice from spouses,

partners, children, friends, and coworkers.

I work with adults exploring many issues including: grief and loss; self-esteem; family of origin issues; career struggles; history of childhood trauma; improving communication patterns. I have helped some gay and lesbian parents explore how to help their children navigate personal comments or questions from schoolteachers and friends.

I have worked with many parents struggling to expand their repertoire of emotional responses, trying to create a better environment for their own children than perhaps they experienced themselves. It is often helpful to examine your own past, since it turns out this usually follows us wherever we go!

Many adults can gain clarity from a protected place to think things over, to give voice to ideas, feelings, and thoughts. It can be easy to lose track of your moral compass & what is important to you. Therapy is a great place to talk this over, because, with a few exceptions about safety, our conversations are confidential. I look forward to talking with you.



Young Adult Men’s Group (ages 17-19)

Do you know a young man who is struggling to become independent? It’s not an easy process. This group will explore such issues as school and/or college preparedness; financial choices; obtaining and maintaining a job; responsible use of technology; building healthy friendships and relationships; independent living skills; and other related topics.

Young adult men, 17 – 19, in any living situation, are welcome. Foster youth welcome.

Participants will be asked to make a commitment to attend all 8 sessions.

Groups start this Fall. Call to register at 248-2020.





*Engaging in
charity allows
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My Clinical Experience

Although it still surprises me to say this, I've been a therapist for 22 years. I grew up in Upstate New York, and was raised in a single-parent family. My mother taught me that there were only two things worth going into debt for: an education and a home. Seems like she was right about the education, anyway!

I majored in journalism and women's studies at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, N.Y., and then moved to Manhattan. Although I was very proud of my brand new liberal arts degree, I could only find employment as an office assistant. So as my mother encouraged me to "get a career, not a job," I enrolled at the University Of Michigan School of Social Work in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and graduated in 1989. I have been a practicing clinical social worker and psychotherapist

since that time.

In 1991, I moved to Las Vegas, and received my License in Clinical Social Work. I initially worked at Bridge Counseling and Harmony Counseling. In 1993, I began working for Southern Nevada Child and Adolescent Services at the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), working with families and children. I worked 13 years for DCFS and have extensive experience helping families in the areas of adoption, abuse and neglect, attachment-related problems, as well as multiple placements through the foster care system. Since 2007, I have taught at UNLV in the School of Social Work.

I work with children (ages 3 and up), adolescents, adults, and families. My clinical work experience has included inpatient settings in psychiatric

hospitals, as well as outpatient mental health clinics, and a variety of groups in both settings. Some of the groups I ran included those for children and adolescent boys; as well as specialized groups focusing on women and self-esteem; eating disorders; suicide bereavement; and AIDS bereavement.

My clinical areas of expertise include:

- depression
- anxiety
- oppositional behaviors
- attentional issues
- trauma and PTSD
- grief and loss
- gay and lesbian teens and adults
- refusal skills for teens (five different ways to say no)

I look forward to working with you.

Developing Empathy in Children

Young people learn so much by watching and listening. It is a generally held value that we need to teach kids to look out for others, the basic golden rule. Children need to see this modeled.

Encourage your child to participate in helping others with charity or random acts of kindness. This allows children to develop their integrity in a world of competing influences. Growing up in a reform Jewish family, I learned about "tikkun olam" (the moral repair of the world) – and that we should each do our part. All religions teach a version of the concept. While none of us

can do everything, all of us can do something.

Yes, children and teens are developmentally self-centered and self-involved. But they also want to help and are receptive if given some direction. Sometimes, redirecting teens to focus on others' struggles enables them to gain perspective on their own dramas. For those kids in the throes of normal turbulent adolescence, caring for a cause larger than themselves can help them grow and mature. **Here are some ideas:**

Time to finally give away old toys and clothes? Enlist your teen's help in the process.

Rather than just put the clothes on the curb for a pick-up, drive with your child to donate them. Let your kid unload the bags so they can **see** the domestic violence office or the homeless shelter.

Ask your teenager to do some online research and give them the task of choosing the charity to which your family will donate.

Volunteer as a family. Help out animal rescue groups. Food pantries always need extra hands to bag groceries. If you love the wilderness, join a Red Rock clean-up day.

Teach your kids to look past themselves, towards others.

Teens & Tech: OMG !!

I was born in 1960 and so the card catalogue, my manual Smith-Corona typewriter with a cloth ribbon, a paperback dictionary and white-out were my tools for a successful college career. When I was in high school, the *World Book Encyclopedia* was my source of knowledge. Cut-and-paste actually included scissors and scotch tape.

I grew up during a time when phones equipped with dials and cords were attached to the wall. If we were not home we didn't know we had missed a call. Television shows came on at a certain time, and I made friends without "social networking" sites.

So, like many adults, I, too, have struggled to keep up with our rapidly changing technological advances. I know many adults who face these challenges.

So here are a few things to remember:

- Our technological advances run far ahead of our common sense in using these new choices responsibly.

- Your teen will not, in fact, pass out or die without texting overnight. Don't be afraid to set limits, even though it is so hard to.

- Just because your cell rings, does not actually mean you need to answer it at that moment.

- Be brave! Run your technology, and don't let it run you!

OK, this might sound old-school, but here goes: I think it is still critically important that children and teens learn to communicate the old-fashioned way: face-to-face. Recently, a teenager told me, "Laurie, you don't understand – I LIKE to text better than to talk with someone. Then I don't have to worry about all that eye contact and stuff."

Exactly my point! We really need to help our young people grow comfortable with "eye contact" and all the other components that go with direct human interaction. It is a troubling reality that the anonymity of the screen allows some people to become thoughtless and hurtful, as cyber bullying shows us.

Remember, if you are busy texting every time you are with your son or daughter, you are losing opportunities to connect with them.

It seems that immediacy has been prioritized far above a more thoughtful response. It may take a while to realize that simply because someone emails you from their smart phone, you do not need to respond instantly.

If you, like me, walked uphill to school 3 miles in the snow every day, then I bet you too realize that life rarely happens in the order, timing, place, that you would prefer. The more we can help our youth realize that sometimes things take time; for relationships to deepen, skills to improve, thoughts to develop, ideas to sharpen, and solutions to evolve. Doesn't this sound more realistic than instant

messaging our way through life?

It has become increasingly clear that electronics contribute to many people's sense of impatience: wanting things instantly, not being able to be patient, or wait your turn.

It is easy for teenagers to confuse immediacy with intimacy. This robs them of the chance to develop and learn interpersonal skills, a necessity for successful long-term relationships.

Kids and teens risk losing the ability to simply space out, get lost in their own thoughts, stare at nature, take a deep breath and go offline for a while. It is easy to believe that more is better, but that is not necessarily so in our age of hyper-tech!

I encourage you to seek a balance, for yourself and your family. Yes, tech is critical for kids to be current with their friends and their social world. Remember that it is equally critical to help young people develop strong, resilient interpersonal skills.



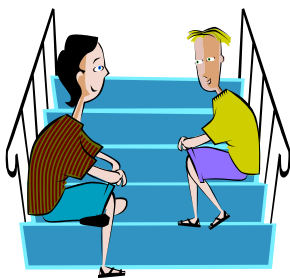
It is easy for teenagers to confuse immediacy with intimacy.



Laurie Lytel, LCSW, LLC

**For appointments, call
248-2020**

“Names Will Never Hurt Me”



Many teenagers, when yelled at repeatedly, choose to go underground with their feelings and struggles – they become silent, sullen and angry.

It turns out this isn't really true. I work with some parents who yell and curse at their kids and then become angry when their teenager swears back at them. If you are swearing at your child, think about giving me a call. You probably know that's not a great practice.

Name-calling rings in an adolescent's ears and s/he will remember and relive those words again and again. It is similar to a child being bullied at school – those words can be terribly hurtful for many youth. Repeatedly cursing, yelling, insulting, or belittling a child or teenager can result in serious consequences: damage self-esteem, increase isolation and alienation, inadvertently encourage poor choices, perhaps leading to depression.

Did you grow up in a family environment where your parents yelled at you? Then do your best to change a hurtful family pattern and learn how to redirect yourself. Some parents say that their kids

provoke them and deserve it, but you know what? Even if your teen is talking back, or oppositional, or angry, or failing school, or irresponsible, it turns out that yelling at them seldom helps. Often, everyone starts yelling, tempers flare, doors slam, family tension builds and violence can and does occur.

Many teenagers, when yelled at repeatedly, choose to go underground with their feelings and struggles – they become silent, sullen and angry. Adult yelling often succeeds in shutting kids down. This may feel like a momentary victory – but it is not, really. Usually, resentments build on both sides: adult and child. And then the next disagreement is more loaded than the last; and so inevitably, these blow-ups are likely to escalate.

Remaining calm helps douse the fire rather than fan the flames. This does not mean that you are giving in or condoning any behaviors. It does mean, however, that in that heated moment you can stop,

breathe, and realize that it is unlikely to be productive to continue. And if you do, the situation may worsen for all involved.

Your child learns communication styles from you, so challenge yourself to teach them: how to maintain a civil tone, control voice volume, refrain from insults, and manage conflict reasonably. Every child, teen, and adult needs to learn these skills.

Remind yourself: you are the adult and it is your job to remain so in any conflict with your child.

There are many strategies to develop alternate ways to manage conflict. It can be helpful to pre-plan your actions, so that you don't have to decide anything at the heated moment, but rather just put your alternative plan into action. If that sounds like a good idea, give me a call and maybe together we can create your plan.

Therapist Consultation Group



Are you a licensed therapist in Las Vegas? Have you been in the mental health field for many years? Do you feel isolated?

Consider joining a new therapist consultation group.

Areas of discussion will include: exploring current clinical concerns, increasing self-confidence and self-awareness; working within one's area of competency;

knowing when to refer; managing ethical dilemmas; self-care for the provider; learning from others' clinical wisdom; technology and confidentiality.

This group is open to licensed mental health professionals, and interns presently in a licensed internship.

This will be a confidential setting in which to share dilemmas, concerns, and ideas with professional peers.

Group starting in the Fall. Call for details.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth LGBTQ: The Initials Might be Confusing, But the Issues are Clear

Remember how self-conscious you were as a teenager? Never felt confident or cool or hip or buff or smart or thin enough? Felt like you never fit in? Most adolescents feel this way at times. But for teens that might be LGBTQ, they experience this tenfold.

I have worked with many LGBTQ adolescents and adults. Despite significant societal changes, many families, teachers, parents, and indeed, many therapists, remain woefully uneducated and misinformed about these adolescents.

This past year has seen a tragic increase in the number of highly publicized suicides, primarily by young, gay males. Perhaps you are familiar with the “It Gets Better” Campaign, where well-known personalities (straight and gay) have produced public service announcements reminding gay teens that tough times will eventually become easier.

LGBTQ youth are at great risk. They have increased rates of depression, substance abuse, and suicide attempts. One of three homeless teenagers is a gay or lesbian. They have increased risk for many harmful behaviors, not because of their identity, but because of the enormous social stigma and challenges they face as they attempt to navigate their own unique coming out process. You can make a difference for these teens by being a receptive and knowledgeable presence in their lives.

If you are gay-affirmative, ask yourself: how would the kids around you know this? Some

parents and teachers are shocked to discover that their kids were afraid to discuss their worries, because they assumed the adults would reject them.

Perhaps you are part of a religious faith that condemns homosexuality, but you have rejected those religious teachings and accept LGBTQ youth. Teenagers struggling to understand the lifelong implications of embracing their identity often experience profound isolation before they

space to figure out who they are in a supportive, nonjudgmental, nurturing setting.

There is a generally-held belief that life has changed for the better for most LGBTQ people. Of course the social climate has improved in some aspects. However, many well-meaning adults *want* the world to be a better place for LGBTQ youth, that they assume it is, sometimes inaccurately so. From this idealized perspective, an adult might assume that a teen’s coming-

jobs if they are gay; LGBTQ people can be evicted from their apartments.

Some social service agencies refuse state funds rather than license gay and lesbian foster parents. Gay and lesbian adoptive parents must rely on the awareness of their social workers to be licensed.

Yes, New York recently legalized gay marriage, but that does not mean that your struggling 14-year old son, who has a crush on his best friend, has any idea how to manage those feelings. Yes, Ellen DeGeneres is very popular, but how does that help a struggling lesbian teenager whose parents keep asking her about dating? Yes, Ricky Martin came out, but how does that impact a young, Hispanic man growing up in a conservative, religious family?

Throughout our culture, there are deep, reassuring pockets of acceptance as well as frightening holes of hatred, rejection, and violence. Many LGBTQ teens never know in which pocket they land. If you think you know a teenager struggling with their identity, I encourage you to reach out to them. Let them know you accept them for who they are, whoever that turns out to be.

LGBT youth from families with low rejection are at lower risk than those from highly rejecting families related to depression, drugs, and risky behaviors.

Ryan, Huebner, Diaz and Sanchez. *Pediatrics*, 2009.

can articulate this very private awareness. LGBTQ youth in strongly religious households often bear overwhelming doubt, guilt, and depression, knowing they face rejection if they are true to themselves. Many youth are fearful of religious condemnation. If you never share your thoughts, how will teens know your beliefs?

Some adolescents have a sense very early on that they are “different.” For many gay and lesbian youth, this is how their first awareness begins. It is critical to provide the

out should be no big deal.

I think a more accurate and helpful understanding is something I heard recently “Acceptance of gay and lesbian issues in our country is a mile wide and an inch deep.” There are many fears: rejection, being taunted or bullied, loss of faith, family and friends. So, if you are a teen struggling to become who you are, what do you see?

In any high school, two of the most common insults reference LGBTQ youth. If you are one, what would you think? School teachers can lose their

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Inside:

Teens & Tech

Navigating Adulthood

Gay and Lesbian Youth

Developing Empathy

Young Adult Men's
Therapy Group
(ages 17-19)

New Opportunities

Therapist Peer Consultation Group

Are you a licensed therapist in Las Vegas? Feeling isolated or lacking peers to consult? This group will serve as a peer consultation group, addressing a variety of clinical concerns. The group will run weekly for 8 weeks, and will provide a confidential, professional setting in which to discuss clinical dilemmas and issues. Those actively working towards clinical licensure are also welcome. Participants will be asked to make a commitment to attend all 8 sessions.

Clinical Supervision

A few spaces are available for weekly clinical supervision for CSW interns working towards their Social Work License. I have been an approved clinical supervisor by the Nevada Board of Examiners for Social Work since 1992.

Office Space Available

For licensed professionals. Various rental options available: Hourly, part-time or full-time. Partially or fully furnished

