

# Team Move combines exercise, counseling for improved mental health

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Holly Lockett fell to the floor, screaming.

She had just heard on the phone that her brother, her lifelong best friend, had died.

On that night three years ago, Lockett had no idea just how much his loss would paralyze her, or for how long.

She also had no idea the path to healing would look a lot like a treadmill. Today her clients are discovering a similar path as members of Team Move, a program that Lockett's personal recovery inspired her to create. She launched it last fall in Plano with counselor Steven Scott.

Part group therapy and part boot camp, Team Move emphasizes that a moving body is key to emotional wellness.

"There are definitely correlations between fitness and mental health," says Lockett, now a certified professional trainer and licensed chemical dependency counselor. "By exercising, you're getting fit and feeling better."

Scott and Lockett, a former Dallas County probation officer, facilitate two 90-minute sessions a week. Sessions cost \$60 each. A group of eight to 10 clients spends the first 45 minutes sharing fears, anxieties, goals, setbacks and successes, and offering each other encouragement and feedback. They also learn new thought patterns and life strategies.

The last half is spent working toward clearly defined fitness goals. Clients discuss nutrition, review their food journals and train with a rotating mix of walking, running, circuit training, yoga and other exercises, all at each client's own pace.

The concept of a counseling-exercise session is not new; some therapists have practiced walking therapy, as opposed to doing sessions in an office. And Jasper Smits, associate professor of psychology at Southern Methodist University, says some social workers might prescribe exercise for managing anxiety or depression. Team Move's combination of equal

parts sharing and sweating in a group setting is unique, he says. While Scott and Lockett lack clinical evidence of specific benefits, they can point to satisfied clients.

Plano third-grade teacher Monica McCaffrey joined Team Move in October after years of yo-yo weight loss. On her way to the first session, she almost turned around and went home.

"I was not sure how I was expected to open up to strangers about my personal life," she said. Later that night "as I saw many of my teammates take off running, I was mentally defeated. All I kept thinking was how out of shape I was and how I would never be able to keep up with the team."

Now down 20 pounds and three dress sizes, the mother of four has completed a 5K race and is even planning to run a half marathon.

"The exercise became my own way to prove to myself that no matter the age or physical condition, if I set my mind to do it, I would achieve it," McCaffrey said.

Loss and inspiration

Lockett had never known life without her older brother, Todd Becker. As kids in Bismarck, N.D., they bonded over their love of music and the fact they were both adopted. As adults, they talked on the phone almost every day.

Two years before her brother's death, he developed a heart infection. But it still came as a shock when he unexpectedly dropped dead in his bathroom one night at the age of 35.

"I knew life was never, ever going to be the same," she said. "I totally felt like my life just shattered around me."

She began seeing a psychologist. During the sessions, she felt an implication that it was "just" her brother, and that she needed to "get over it."

"I don't do well sitting in an office and having to tell my story on command, so I was taking a risk with traditional therapy," she said. "It was not a good fit for me. It felt contrived."

Lockett hit rock bottom. She didn't even want to get out of bed.

"I had played soccer for years, but had no desire to do that anymore, no desire to run anymore, no desire to do kickboxing at the gym anymore," said Lockett, mother of two sons. "I just could not find the motivation to do anything that I normally did."

More than a year passed, and she still lived in a fog. Her husband, Brent, had been patient but finally told her, "You have to come back to life." He

signed her up for a gym membership.

Simply getting to the fitness center was a victory. She started with a little cardio. Friends joined her in support. Then she began taking kickboxing classes. Then weights. Then yoga. Next she decided to go to the gym three times a week instead of two.

Within weeks, she started to laugh again. Within six months, she decided to live again.

Some mental-health professionals say the best thing to do with grief "is to cry it out," she said. "But the best thing for me was to run it out."

Her brother had always told her she'd make a great counselor, so she began thinking about grad school. Her husband suggested she seek advice from his friend Steven Scott.

"Our initial contact was to consult about her grad program and which course work would most benefit her in private practice," Scott said. "I would give her some things to work on related to grief when I found out she was struggling, and she would let me know how it worked for her."

She occasionally dropped by with coffee to chat between Scott's appointments when she felt low. He never made her feel rushed to heal - which helped her to do exactly that.

One day last summer, she told him about her idea for a program that blends physical exercise with emotional support. That's what brought her back to life, so maybe it would help others do the same. Scott agreed.

"My 'normal' died on Feb. 21, 2007," she said. "However, I have a new normal now, and a new mission. I truly believe that this program can change lives."