

# Ohio Association for Spiritual, Ethical & Religious Values in Counseling

www.oaservic.org

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## MESSAGE FROM OASERVIC PRESIDENT Claudia Sadler-Gerhardt, Ph.D.

Happy Spring!

It's always so good to see the spring blossoms with their burst of vibrant colors after the gloom of winter! It seems that this past winter lasted forever, but the glory of spring more than makes up for it. As the birds are busy chirping and singing, foraging for seeds and worms, and making their nests, I am once again reminded of the renewal of new life and a new season. Sanda Gibson's article below inspires me to become mindful of the seasonal changes, to observe, listen, smell what's going on around me, to savor the moments as I open myself up to this new season.

As our year in OASERVIC comes to an end, I reflected on the past year and some of the notable things we have accomplished. We went completely "green" this year, thanks to some major webpage revisions and a desire to communicate electronically. We provided a well attended workshop on the spiritual competencies at the All Ohio Counselors' Conference, reinforcing that counselors are concerned about learning how to ethically and sensitively help clients who are interested in examining or addressing spiritual issues. We also returned to the former practice of offering a spring workshop. Dr. Elizabeth Welfel from Cleveland State University shared an excellent presentation on ethics in counseling. We honored Dr. Donna Jean Owens Menigat with the OASERVIC Leadership & Humanitarian Award for 2010 at that workshop. (Please see the article below about Donna).

I have had the privilege of working with a TERRIFIC Executive Board this year!! They are awesome individuals, and it's been wonderful to work with them. OASERVIC is not a typical "group" with lots of meetings and agendas, but we have been busy and fruitful, and I am very proud of the folks who've been involved this year. A special thank you to Julie McLaughlin, Secretary, and Grant Hollenbach, Treasurer, the unsung heroes of any organization, who kept us running. Thank you to Laura Freidner, who revised and revamped the OASERVIC webpage and kept the listserv updated, making electronic communication feasible. A huge thank you to Patricia Shumay, the Spring Workshop Chair, which was a big job! Kudos also to Joan Steidl, Awards Chair, who handled the nominations and obtained the awards; to Shawn Crabtree, Newsletter Chair, who designed the format for these issues of *Connections* and added all the cool graphics; to Sandy Kurka, Membership Chair, who kept up with the letters for new and renewing members each month; and to Donna Menigat, once again our Wellness Room Coordinator who tended to our bodies, souls, and spirits during the busy times at the All Ohio Counselors' Conference—you've all been such a help! And a big thank you to Sanda Gibson so willingly offered her excellent writing & editing

*It's time to introduce you all to our new President, Denise Lewis, who will take office officially in July.*

# CONNECTIONS

skills to our newsletter! OASERVIC has been greatly strengthened by all of your efforts, and I personally have been honored to work with such a great team!

And now, it's time to introduce to you all our new President, Denise Lewis, who will take office officially July 1. I look forward to working with her in my capacity as Past President, and I know it will be a good year! Thank you also to Carmella Hill, this year's Past President, and the original force behind implementing the OASERVIC award!

Have a great summer!

Thank you for the honor of serving as OASERVIC President!

Claudia

## **OASERVIC Webpage rocks!**

[www.oaservic.org](http://www.oaservic.org)



I have had the privilege to be a part of serving with OASERVIC this past year updating and maintaining the webpage. If you have visited the webpage recently you have seen a subtle, yet meaningful change that I made with the graphics that I believe represents the vision of OASERVIC.

I often visualize concepts in a tangible way that incorporates nature and minimalistic objects. When thinking of the individual aspects of what this organization promotes I believe I saw the delicate balance of *Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling* as more than words and intent but also as a visual symbol.

The graphic of the rocks pictured on the webpage really represents how something so intricate and challenging can be balanced with precision and care. That is what I visualize as a counselor who is intent on weaving spiritual, ethical and religious values in the fabric of our profession and my life work. As I pondered this symbolism I came to another realization that this process of embracing our beliefs takes time, which often requires being still. That is where the graphic of the bench on the stone walk comes in. What we bring into counseling as it relates to our spiritual beliefs, ethical obligations, and unique religious values must be more than a passing thought or spontaneous decisions that have no foundation but must be what we possess as a result of much patience, deliberation, maturity, passion and commitment.

Designing that part of the webpage was a small but significant way that I had much pleasure in being a part of. My hope is that we might be encouraged to take time to know what we believe, continue to grow and mature, and have the courage to be passionate and committed to those beliefs. Perhaps visuals and symbols are an unassuming yet significant part of portraying who we are and say more than we might think. I am going to go sit on the bench and ponder that for a while!

**Laura Freidner, CT**



## Mindful Eating

Sanda Gibson, M.A., P.C.

Imagine several succulent purple blackberries, lightly dusted with caramel-colored sugar to sweeten the natural tartness of the berry. The fruit is set on a small glass plate with a scalloped edge. They look jewel-like in presentation. My client and I scrutinize the berries. We talk about them—the color, the bumpy shape, the way the sugar glistens on the top. We each select a berry and put it our mouths. We are silent as we slowly feel the texture and the coldness of the berry, the mingling of tartness and sweetness as we bite down and chew. We savor every sensation. Outside my office door we hear voices, the noise of the copier spitting out paper, the slamming of doors. We acknowledge the auditory distractions and let them go. There are piles of papers, folders and books all around us. We notice the visual distractions and let them go. We suspend rumination about all the worries that race through our minds. Work can wait; problems can wait. We are two people intently and reverently experiencing a single blackberry. My client smiles. “I’ve never eaten a blackberry before. It’s wonderful!”

Three minutes has passed. Welcome to mindful eating.

Eating is one of the most frustrating, controversial, guilt-ridden and out-of-control aspects of the American culture today. From one extreme of the continuum to the other, from anorexia to binge eating, we have lost our ability to eat with satisfaction, pleasure, and self-love. By losing connection with eating as a natural and material aspect of healthy spirituality, we have fallen prey to diet schemes, junk food advertising, and impossible standards of perfection.

Those of us working in mental health know the alarming mortality statistics of eating disorders where food restriction is the central symptom. If we move to the opposite end of the eating spectrum, we are faced with morbid obesity. Obesity is the third leading cause of preventable death in this country, behind cigarette smoking and high blood pressure. This epidemic has filtered down to our children. First Lady Michelle Obama has embarked on a crusade to end childhood obesity. Since 1980, overweight rates have tripled among kids age 12 to 19, with one third of America’s youth suffering from weight problems. We face the frightening prospect that this next generation will suffer from a myriad of diseases related to obesity and thus prematurely shorten their life spans.

Sanda will be presenting at the national ASERVIC conference at Myrtle Beach, SC this August where she will present more details of her work in mindful eating and emotional regulation. Her topic is  
*Soul Food:  
The Spirituality of Eating.*

Back to the blackberries. In my practice, I was simultaneously working with two clients with disordered eating problems. One suffered from anorexia. The other was referred by a hospital bariatric program for counseling; she had to address her emotional eating issues and also lose weight to qualify as a surgery candidate. Quite by surprise, I discovered that mindful eating became the centerpiece of their treatment. Even more surprising was that both improved. The client with anorexia stopped severe

caloric restriction; she is maintaining a healthy weight. The client who needed the surgery lost 38 pounds and met the requirements for surgery.

Thus began a personal intellectual and spiritual journey to understand and embrace this concept of mindful eating. As I considered the frenetic, multi-tasking nature of our lifestyle, I came to understand that the various eating disorders are an extension of disordered lifestyles. Eating should be one of the most frequent and celebratory activities of life. Yet, we have lost a sense of self-nurture, connectedness, community, and gratitude that should come with eating. We have lost the ability to make wise choices about food by simply listening to the natural wisdom of our bodies. In the case of my clients, food became a weapon of self-harm to cope with emotional problems rather than a life-sustaining gift. The way to heal was through mindful eating.

What is mindful eating? While I used several resources to develop treatment interventions for my clients, a excellent place to start to understand this concept is The Center for Mindful Eating ([http://www.tcme.org/board/j\\_kristeller.htm](http://www.tcme.org/board/j_kristeller.htm)). Jean Kristeller, PhD, co-founder of the center, is a clinical psychologist whose current work in the meditation area examines ways to integrate meditative techniques into more comprehensive therapy or support programs for clients suffering from binge eating disorders. The site has a plethora of resources for clinicians.

Listed are principles of mindfulness and mindful eating that have been developed by The Center for Mindful Eating. Learning about mindful eating has improved my own self-care practices and given me wonderful tools to help many clients, not just those with diagnosable eating disorders. If you peruse this site, I hope you will be inspired to consider how you might help clients develop a sane and sacred relationship with food. It all begins with a blackberry.

**Principles of Mindfulness:**

- Mindfulness is deliberately paying attention, non-judgmentally.
- Mindfulness encompasses both internal processes and external environments.
- Mindfulness is being aware of what is present for you mentally, emotionally and physically in each moment.
- With practice, mindfulness cultivates the possibility of freeing yourself of reactive, habitual patterns of thinking, feeling and acting.
- Mindfulness promotes balance, choice, wisdom and acceptance of what is.

**Mindful Eating is:**

- Allowing yourself to become aware of the positive and nurturing opportunities that are available through food preparation and consumption by respecting your own inner wisdom.
- Choosing to eat food that is both pleasing to you and nourishing to your body by using all your senses to explore, savor and taste.
- Acknowledging responses to food (like, neutral or dislikes) without judgment.
- Learning to be aware of physical hunger and satiety cues to guide your decision to being eating and to stop eating.

**Someone Who Eats Mindfully:**

- Acknowledges that there is no right or wrong way to eat but varying degrees of awareness surrounding the experience of food.
- Accepts that his/her eating experiences are unique.
- Is an individual who looks at the immediate choices and direct experiences associated with food and eating: not to the distant health outcome of that choice.
- Is aware of and reflects on the effects caused be unmindful eating.
- Experiences insight about how he/she can act to achieve specific health goals as he/she becomes more attuned to the direct experience of eating and feelings of health.
- Becomes aware of the interconnection of earth, living beings, and cultural practices and the impact of his/her choices on those systems.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO...**  
**Donna Jean Owens Menigat, Ph.D., LPCC-S**  
**Recipient of the 2010 OASERVIC Humanitarian & Leadership Award**

Dr. Donna Menigat was awarded the 2010 OASERVIC Humanitarian & Leadership Award at the Spring Workshop, April 2, 2010. Donna graduated from Ohio University with her Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision. She has worked in emergency services evaluation and mental health practice. She founded a private practice and worked there for a number of years. She currently is an active supervisor for students and Clinical Residents. Additionally Donna has taught for Ohio University and the University of Dayton, and she has been a regular workshop presenter locally and state-wide, presenting regularly at the All Ohio Counselors' Conference in Columbus. Donna has been involved with OASERVIC for several years, serving as President Elect, President, and Past President, and as the chair of the Wellness Room at All Ohio for the past few years.

Donna is also actively involved in her church as a spiritual director, among other activities, and in her community. She has worked with both the Komen Race for the Cure and the Relay for Life, and is on the Advisory Board of the American Cancer Society. In 2009, she was recognized as the Volunteer of the Year by the American Cancer Society. A breast cancer survivor, she noticed while lying on the radiation table looking at the plain white ceiling, that there was an opportunity to change what might be a discouraging and empty experience for the patient into something with spiritual value. Obtaining funding and an artist, Donna arranged for the ceiling to be painted with a mandala of hands of different colors. She has also been instrumental in getting artwork in the oncology treatment room of her local center. Her recent Relay for Life team obtained a pink golf cart and raffled it off for over \$5000 for the cancer society.

Donna truly exemplifies the values recognized by the Humanitarian & Leadership Award, and we are very proud to acknowledge Donna as the 2010 recipient of this award! Congratulations, Donna!

**ASERVIC Conference "Navigating the Spiritual Journey of Life"**  
**August 1-3 Myrtle Beach, SC**

As noted above Sanda Gibson will be a presenter, and so will Grant Hollenbach and Claudia Sadler-Gerhardt, who will present "Legacy Work: Helping Terminally Ill Clients." Registration is still open if you'd like to have a few days retreat, rejuvenation, and fun in the sun.

Families are invited to join in on the fun.