

2015 Summer

# LOUISIANA GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY SOCIETY

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## 2015 Fall Institute – September 26

Behavioral Wellness Center -  
Baton Rouge General Hospital  
4045 North Boulevard  
Baton Rouge, LA 70806

featuring

*David Hayes, PhD*

&

*Christen Cummins, LCSW*

on the topic of

**Existential Group Psychotherapy**

## LGPS Celebrates its 60th Anniversary 1955-2015

### Message from Your President

SOME OF YOU KNOW ME, SOME DO NOT. I have the tendency to sink in to the background at times. I'm more of a listener than I am a talker. I am an introvert, and I am okay with that. So, first let me introduce myself. I'm Melanie Faust, LCSW, CGP and I am honored to be your current President. LGPS has been my professional home since before I was a "professional." I joined as a student and six years later I am still here and still inspired by this group of Group Psychotherapy professionals.

LGPS has helped me grow both personally and professionally. From a quiet, reserved observer to a confident and competent group leader. The things I have gotten from LGPS far outweigh the meager \$65 membership fee.

As LGPS celebrates 60 years I reflect back over the links in the chain that led to me being here and to many others being here. I think about the rich history that has preceded us and to the history we are creating, and I think of the connections that have brought all of us to this wonderful organization. I owe my connection to LGPS to several different people and places that created this caring, welcoming and educa-

## Message from Your President, con't

tional environment.

First was my experience at LSU Mental Health, and LGPS leaders like Chris Garner, David Hayes, Amy Springer, Rachel Stokes and Melinda Le. They painted such a lovely picture of LGPS that I knew I had to be a part of it. As a graduate student I attended the Fall institute in 2009. Someone in LGPS sponsored me, and though I do not know who my sponsor was; I do know that I owe that person a lot of thanks. A spark was ignited. My professional group experience grew from there. Dr. Le welcomed me as an observer of one of her therapy groups and Dr. Garner allowed me my first opportunity to form and co-facilitate a process group (both terrifying and fulfilling at the same time!)

Then came Karen Travis. A champion of group therapy, a role model and an educator. Karen's passion for group showed through her teaching style and was infectious. I learned so much about myself and my role as a therapist in her group therapy course. It was

one of the most valuable group experiences I have ever had. I was also privileged to be one of the first recipients of the Blue Cross/LSU/LGPS scholarships. I attended the LGPS Spring institute on a scholarship in 2010 and I have not left. Karen invited me to attend the board meeting and encouraged me to take the position as Student Representative. I owe her many thanks.

From that point on I was hooked. I attended AGPA on scholarship twice and was a part of the hospitality committee when we hosted AGPA here in Louisiana. I have also worked to become a Certified Group Psychotherapist. I then served as Membership Chair and one thing I know for sure is that LGPS' greatest assets are the members. The people who make up this group dedicated to groups are incredible. You, our members, welcome students, foster relationships and encourage growth, and it is because of the care and respect that you all demonstrate that I am now President of this organization.

As President I hope to bring you exciting learning opportunities, interesting discussions and great connections. My goal is also to continue to build and develop this organization. As a leader in LGPS, I work to foster the passion and desire for group in the next generation of professionals. In fact, this year, two of the interns I worked with received scholarships to LGPS and one is now a board member. And the links in the chain continue. It is the responsibility of us, the current members, to bring LGPS into the future. So many of you are already doing so. Thank You.

To those who may think there is not much they can do; I disagree. Tell someone about your LGPS experience, invite a student, a friend, a colleague to attend our Fall or Spring Institutes, bring back a member who may have drifted away. We have a rich history of providing exceptional education to anyone interested in group psychotherapy and we hope to continue that tradition for many years to come.

LGPS has helped me to find my voice. It is a group I am proud to be a part of, and one that I hope you are proud to be a part of too. My hope is that LGPS will grow even stronger, and in another 60 years, that the LGPS president has as much respect and reverence as I do now for this organization and for those who have worked so hard to keep it going.

We live our lives in groups.

Respectfully,

MELANIE FAUST  
LCSW, CGP

### **We want to hear your LGPS origin story.**

Who are the links in your chain?

How did you become a member?

Why did you stay or what/who brought you back?

Share your stories with us at  
LGPSnews@gmail.com

## From Your AGPA Representative

IT IS AN HONOR TO SERVE as the affiliate representative for The American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA).

LGPS consistently provides quality-training opportunities in Louisiana, often drawing from the prestigious AGPA community. AGPA's local and regional Affiliate Societies across the country offer collegiality, referral networks, training, consultation, and supervision. AGPA

members are encouraged to exchange professional knowledge and skills through interdisciplinary, national and local contacts, with many opportunities for members at all levels.

I attended my first AGPA annual meeting as a student and was immediately hooked. This year I was honored to be a first time faculty member. The generosity of the AGPA family is evident from the many

scholarships, discounts available to new professionals and inclusive atmosphere, which welcomes new members and old friends each year.

The 2015 Annual Meeting, *Promoting Secure Attachments through Group Therapy*, was held in San Francisco February 23-28.

The 2016 Annual Meeting, *Transformation in Group: From Isolation*

to *Connection* will be held February 22-27 in New York City.

I would like to encourage anyone interested in this invaluable training to apply for one of the many scholarships available. Information can be found on [www.agpa.org](http://www.agpa.org).

DEBBIE WRAY  
LCSW

## Meet Your 2015-2016 Executive Board

### President

*Melanie Faust, LCSW, CGP*  
Clinical Social Worker  
Behavioral Wellness  
Center - Baton Rouge  
General

### President Elect

*Kevin Credeur, PLPC*  
Behavioral Counselor  
Behavioral Wellness  
Center - Baton Rouge  
General

### Past President

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Social Worker/Dean of Students  
LA Key Academy

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Professor

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Program

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Worker  
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*Christen Cummins, LCSW*  
Clinical Social Worker  
LSU Mental Health  
Center

### AGPA Affiliate Rep & Historian

*Debbie Wray, LCSW*  
Clinical Social Worker  
Private Practice

### Editor & Webmaster

*Maggie Shaver, LMSW*  
Social Worker  
Spectrum Rehab  
Services

### Member at Large

*Jason Crooks, LMSW*  
Social Worker  
Jefferson Oaks  
Behavioral Health

### Student Representatives

*Blaine Masinter,*  
LSU MSW Student

*Emily Creed,*  
LSU MSW Student

## Developing a Psychotherapeutic Mentality—The Beginning

### A NOTE TO BEGINNING THERAPISTS AND A COMMENSURATE NOD TO THEIR MENTORS.

When we begin our careers as psychotherapists we crave a road-map to help us help our clients. We suffer from an imposter syndrome and a sense of incompetence, yet the desire to heal is powerful. This desire is what led us to the water, yet we are fearful to drink. Despite our inexperience and self-doubt, we know in our hearts and souls that we can help. Hope is powerful. We do well because we never underestimate hope and do all we can to instill it in our clients.

Still, we need more than hope.

Our theories can be lighthouses in a dark night in a vast sea of the mind. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately depending on our preferences, there is no dominant paradigm in psychotherapy like there is in physics. There is no Newton, and there is no Einstein. Despite what some mentors or teachers may tell us there is no “one” way to help people. There is no

manual or “road map” for the unique individual with whom we encounter. There never will be, at least not in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, we will need the manuals and the theories. They will be helpful, at least early on. We must learn to develop a flexible and ever-evolving Psychotherapeutic Mentality. We must strengthen the illuminative power of our lighthouses over time.

The Psychotherapeutic Mentality involves using all of the research-informed theories that we find useful. Flexibility in theory leads to flexibility in technique. We become pragmatic and pan-theoretical. The well-researched theories of therapy involve those which are behavioral, cognitive, and psychodynamic/interpersonal in nature. When we review psychotherapy outcome research we find scant evidence that any one theory of practice is better than another, at least at the group sample level. When “they” tell us differently, we do not believe. We are readily skeptical of the therapy du jour.

For instance, when DBT came out the assumption was that it was the best treatment for Borderline Personality Disorder. In reality, it was an innovative and well-researched model that showed superior results in just two areas – it decreased the fre-

quency of hospitalizations and decreased parasuicidal behavior more effectively than the models with which it was compared. DBT proper is a solid model of therapy but requires a team of professionals to accomplish these results. As far as I know, there is no program within our state that does it that way (like in the studies). No offense. I know of many apt therapists in town that use DBT-oriented therapies and help countless patients with affective regulation. I like Marsha Linehan, and I am only using this as an example to say, “Please, do not blindly jump on the bandwagon.”

*Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect.*

*Mark Twain*

There are a few exceptions to the idea that all major theories work about the same. For example, people with anxiety need to be exposed to what they fear (behaviorism). Exposure is the only real potential cure for phobias. People who want to grow emotionally need a psychodynamic/relational/interpersonal and/or an existential approach. Know thyself.

We do two things. 1) We go with the theoretical lens we can use and to which we have an intellectual and emo-

*“There is no “one” way to help people... the therapeutic alliance, regardless of model of therapy, is the most robust and reliable predictor of therapeutic change.”*

quency of hospitalizations and decreased parasuicidal behavior more effectively than the models with which it was compared. DBT proper is a solid model of therapy but requires a team of professionals to accomplish these

## Developing a Psychotherapeutic Mentality—The Beginning, con't

tional attachment. 2) We pick one that we think will work for the client. The former (one we can use and fits us well) may actually be more important, despite popular belief, than the latter since we – and the working alliance – are the instruments of change. Of the things the therapist has some degree of control over, the therapeutic alliance, regardless of model of therapy, is the most robust and reliable predictor of therapeutic outcome. From an empirical standpoint, no one can effectively argue with that point - of course, empa-

thy is a strong second, but the two may be virtually inseparable. We are the healers, not the theory or manual and certainly not the technique.

Rather than technique what we need is a useful lens with which to see our client and his or her problems and underlying dynamics. It is our thinking and not so much our “techniques” that determine and guide the course of treatment. We trust our gut. We follow our empathy, compassion, and desire to heal. We enlist the client in collaboration. We consult

with our peers, supervisors, and mentors. The treatment and technique spring forth from the theoretical conceptualization of the patient not vice versa.

The fundamental hypotheses/assumptions of behavioral, cognitive, and psychodynamic theories are a source of rich utility; they will guide us and help filter the immense data we encounter in every individual and group session, if we let them.

Some of these important assumptions include psychic (mental) determinism – that is,

we are determined by our minds – what we do, what we think, and what we feel are a function of our own personal psychology. Then, there is the predominance of the unconscious – that is, most of what we know, we do not know at any given time. If we combine psychic determinism and the predominance of the unconscious, things get really interesting. We realize that we are being jerked around by our own minds and that most of it is outside of our awareness. Yikes! We use this mindset and these useful as-

## LGPS on the Internet

### WHAT'S AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE?

- Renew your LGPS membership
- Become a Preservation Member by donating \$25 or more
- Register for LGPS Institutes
- Check out a list of past events, complete with presenters & topics

### WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK

Please take a few minutes to complete our online participant feedback form so we can improve our organization and our institutes.

1. Visit [lgpsonline.org](http://lgpsonline.org)
2. Click “Events”
3. Click “Participant Feedback”

**[WWW.LGPSONLINE.ORG](http://WWW.LGPSONLINE.ORG)**

**[LGPSNEWS@GMAIL.COM](mailto:LGPSNEWS@GMAIL.COM)**

## Developing a Psychotherapeutic Mentality—The Beginning, con't

sumptions to guide our work. Assume these psychic laws are truth, and we will see things we would not otherwise see. Door knob remarks, dreams, missed appointments, slips of the tongue, and a multitude of other behaviors become potentially meaningful for the client's growth. Pay attention to our patients' dreams! These psychic laws are but one pair of lenses with which to look through. Discard them if they do not work for you.

*It is the theory that decides what we can observe.*

*Albert Einstein*

Another useful set of lenses can be realized from the Pavlovian/Classical (associative) conditioning and the operant/Skinnerian (reinforcement) conditioning models of therapy. These views of human suffering work very well with anxiety conditions and are good for behavioral activation in depressive illnesses. Again, the only way to truly beat anxiety is to face/expose ourselves to what we fear. In a related theory and at the group level, re-

search studies suggest cognitive therapy works well for depression and anxiety. The proof is in the pudding. Many studies support this notion. However, there is

*“It is we  
who are the  
instruments of  
change.”*

mounting evidence that the assumed mechanisms of change or therapeutic ingredients have little empirical backing despite their intuitive appeal. The active ingredients appear to have more to do with the therapeutic alliance, collaboration, and other relational and psychodynamic elements than the “cognitive” ones. See Shedler's critical review of the research in the *American Psychologist* (2010).

In short, it is we who are the instruments of change. No theory is. There is no way around this fact; we need to face ourselves. Nevertheless, we need these lighthouses to guide us. More importantly, we need to hone the true instruments, our Selves.

We also need our mentors, supervisors, and peers.

This business is our calling. It is a relationship business, and business is good.

Ever,

CHRISTOPHER D. GARNER,  
PSY.D.

*PS: I realized much later than its conception that the development of idea for the title, “The Psychotherapeutic Mentality,” was unconsciously influenced by a chapter title in Nancy McWilliams's third book. We do well to read her works.*

*Thanks and love to Nancy.*

*Be yourself; no base imitator of another, but your best self. There is something which you can do better than another. Listen to the inward voice and bravely obey that. Do the things at which you are great, not what you were never made for.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson,  
Self-Reliance and Other  
Essays*

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Written by Christopher D.  
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Garner Psychological  
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## Excerpts from Group Foundation Scholarship Application Experience Essays

### From Robyn Belle, on the application process:

"I will admit that applying for the scholarship was a little intimidating...Overall, the process was a wonderful learning experience. Writing the scholarship letter was fun because we were encouraged to express our feelings and "our story" in a more meaningful way than in other academic/professional letters I have written...I contacted AGPA by phone and email throughout the application process. Everyone I interacted with was prompt and helpful...My advice to anyone who is a first-time applicant is to not do it alone. If possible find someone else who has attended the conference and/or another person who is applying for a scholarship also."

### From LaCrystal McCoy, MA, PLPC, on her experience at an institute:

"Having been given the opportunity to learn and take part of continuing your education is a vital part in succeeding in your career goals...I participated in a grief institute and it exceeded my expectations...the knowledge that I was

able to obtain not only benefited me in my career choice, but also in my daily struggles and walk of life."

### From Rachael E. Edmiston, MSW, on her experience at an institute:

"Prior to [my second year internship at] LSU Mental Health Service, I had never observed or participated in group treatment....My curiosity about group flourished early in my internship when I had the opportunity to learn from two therapists on our staff, Dr. David Hayes and Christen Cummins, both of whom I now consider mentors. Their passion for the group process sparked my interest in a facilitating role and I immediately sought out to form and co-facilitate a group...Just a piece of advice for students: always apply for scholarships. You will only regret the chances you didn't take."

### From Rachael E. Edmiston, MSW, on her concerns from attending for the first time:

"In the weeks before the Spring Institute, one of my wonderful student colleagues shared a genuine concern with

me: she did not want to attend the conference because she did not feel comfortable sharing personal information about her struggles with potential employers. Cue the panic inside me: I have to share personal information if I attend this conference? In hopes that it will help individuals with similar concerns, I want to put this issue to rest right now. You are NOT forced to share any personal information. Experiential group has good

intentions: personal and professional growth. It is your choice to use the time how you see fit.

...As for the concern of judgment by potential employers: What kind of profession would we be if we expected our colleagues to not have any difficulties?...I did something I had never done before, I shared personal difficulties with complete strangers. The result? Total liberation...I felt free."

## 2015 Spring Institute

### LSU TRAINING AWARD RECIPIENTS

Sponsored by  
Blue Cross Blue Shield  
& LSU School of  
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Tristan Hahn  
Collin Murray  
Rachael Edmiston  
Julie Insyxiengmay

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Rachel Dorsa

Apply for a scholarship  
to our 2015 Fall Institute  
by visiting our website [lgpsonline.org](http://lgpsonline.org)  
and clicking "Events"

## Upcoming Events

### LPA Katrina 10th Anniversary Wellness Workshop August 22 & 29

*LGPS is proud to be a sponsor of these Wellness Workshops.*

Katrina is upon us once again. If you are re-experiencing emotional suffering, join us and work it through. Keep the memories, but lose the fears.

*For more information*  
Dr. Fernando Pastrana  
(504) 366-1377

Dr. Darlyne Nemeth  
dgnemeth@gmail.com

Visit our website  
lgpsonline.org

## Self Care

In our profession, self care is of utmost importance. Look for this new column in future newsletters as a reminder of its importance, and as a way to spread tips, habits, and simple inspiration that sparks joy.

### 2015 Fall Institute September 26

4045 North Boulevard  
Baton Rouge, LA  
70806

*featuring*  
David Hayes, PhD &  
Christen Cummins, LCSW

*on the topic of*  
Existential Group Psychotherapy

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Look for a brochure in the mail in the coming weeks OR visit our website [lgpsonline.org](http://lgpsonline.org), click "Events", then click "Register Now"

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### 2016 Spring Institute April 1-2

Hampton Inn  
Convention Center  
New Orleans, LA

*featuring*  
Molyn Leszcz, MD, co-  
author of Irvin Yalom's The  
Theory and Practice of  
Group Psychotherapy

*on the topic of*  
Maximizing and Sustaining  
Your Effectiveness in Group  
Psychotherapy

*Book your Hotel*  
book by 3/2/16 to receive  
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(504) 566-9990

check out Molyn Leszcz's  
new book, Psychotherapy  
Essentials To Go: Achieving  
Psychotherapy Effective-  
ness

### 2016 Fall Institute October 29

LSU Peabody Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA

### 2017 Spring Institute April 21-22

Hampton Inn  
Convention Center  
New Orleans, LA

LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE