

# Cognitive *focus*

20 Years | Newsletter of the Centre for Cognitive Therapy | In Ottawa

## 20th Anniversary

2015 marks the 20th Anniversary of the Centre for Cognitive Therapy. In 1995 Drs Jane Blouin, Arthur Blouin and Jane Barlow moved the first Eating Disorder Clinic in the city, from the Civic Campus of the Ottawa Hospital into the community. The move allowed expansion to meet community demand and to provide Cognitive Therapy to a wider range of problems. After 20 years of growth, the core group remains together today.

## Lending Library

The Centre for Cognitive Therapy has a lending library of books for clients, for use as educational homework. A recent addition is 'Flourish' by Martin Seligman, reviewing the latest research and applications of Positive psychology.

## Contact

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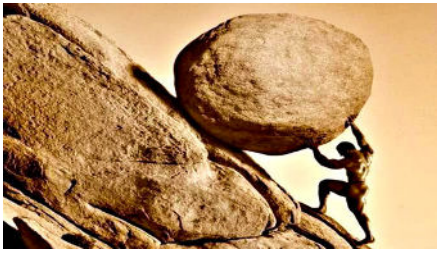
## The Goal is to Thrive

*Stepping beyond alleviating suffering*

Martin Seligman has stressed that to live a happy, or flourishing life it takes more than a lot of pleasure. In fact his research indicates that the pursuit of pleasure on its own adds little to a thriving life. Dan Gilbert emphasizes that we are very bad at predicting what really pays off in life. Billions are spent on lottery tickets, but winners seldom achieve greater happiness (frequently the opposite). Engaging in challenging, meaningful projects, important social relationships and some sense of personal accomplishment, are much more important than pleasure. Pleasures only help when the other factors are in play.

Centre for  
**Cognitive Therapy**

## Developing Grit and Resilience



Cognitive Therapy has been effective at treating a wide variety of diagnosable disorders and aiding in the adaptation to many life problems. Developing emotional resilience and grit is now a major goal. Resilience is the ability to bounce back or recover after difficulty.

The following strategies help us develop resilience and become 'grittier':

**Make Connections.** Good relationships help. Be willing to accept help when it can be beneficial.

**Accept Challenges.** Crises are part of the process. View them as surmountable challenges.

**Meditate Mindfully.** Meditating 25 minutes a day for 8 weeks has been found to reduce the size of the alarm structure of the brain (the amygdala) and increase frontal areas that are the reflective part of the brain.

**Practice 'standing it!'** Avoid telling yourself you 'can't stand it', a phrase often heard. Ellis called this 'I-can't-stand-it-itis', an ailment afflicting modern society.

We are shifting our perspective on the 'thriving life'. It turns out that thriving does not come from what the 'Freedom 55' ads promise; endless peace, pleasure, relaxation and calm. In fact physical and emotional challenges are critical to building resilience, an important component of the flourishing life. Angela Duckworth finds that both success and well being are predicted by what she calls Grit. It consists of diligence, (sustaining effort and interest in long term goals) and self-control, (regulating impulses in the face of diversions). Carol Dweck states that taking a 'process' rather than an 'end point' perspective reduces our frustration, promoting success and thriving. Knowing we can have an impact rather than feeling helpless is also critical.

The popularity and effectiveness of Mindfulness Meditation is related to the concept that suffering is not a function of the pain and discomfort we experience in life (pain and discomfort is universal). Suffering is a function of the degree to which we resist pain and discomfort (emotional and physical). One of the major tenets of Mindfulness, is acceptance of our challenges and discomforts, rather than avoiding or resisting them.

Years ago Albert Ellis, one of the founders of Cognitive Therapy, emphasized that our modern society promotes what he called 'low frustration tolerance', the illness of our age. He advocated a more stoical approach to life. Modern research supports this perspective toward developing a thriving life.

