

Spring Newsletter

Olive Branch
Counselling

It's All About Change

Our mission statement says that Olive Branch Counselling provides an environment for individuals to address their issues 'with a view to effecting positive change'. Most people who seek counselling are acknowledging that something is not right in their lives. The challenge lies in identifying what needs to change.

In my experience, we can attempt to change one or more of three areas in our lives. Firstly we can try to change others whose attitudes or behaviour are having an adverse effect upon us. It is possible to coerce, order, persuade or bully someone into doing anything, and this may get us a temporary respite, but the person will remain intrinsically unchanged, and given the first opportunity will revert to their former behaviour.

Secondly, we can change our environment. For example someone wishing to lose weight would

empty the fridge of processed meals, cream cake and chips. This will help initially, but unless the person has the right motivation attitude or incentive, he or she will soon succumb, as temptation is presented in restaurants, supermarkets and social gatherings.

Finally, and most importantly, we can change ourselves. By this I mean our attitudes, beliefs, values and thinking. When we see others, the world and our situation within it differently, we begin to realise our true self-worth and our right to feel and think independently. This type of change can be diffi-

cult, and this is where counselling can help.



If you have issues in your life that are causing concern, something will need to change. It's best to start with the area over which you have the most influence – YOU.

Geoff (Olive Branch counsellor)

A Retiring Counsellor.....

George Howard has decided to stand down as a counsellor at Olive Branch. George is one of our founder members. He has been a much valued member of the team with a wealth of experience and a quiet, gentle wit. We would like to thank him for all

he has given over the years, not only as a counsellor, but as a member of the management team. We are pleased that he has not completely severed his connections with us and will continue as a member of the support team.

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Special points of interest:

- People who seek counselling know that something needs to change
- We can try to change others, but it usually doesn't work
- We can try to change our environment, and this may help
- We can address the things in ourselves that need to change

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The following extract is used with permission from the author. To preserve client confidentiality, 'Maud's name and details have been changed.

Sand-Tray Therapy with Adults

By Roger Day PTSTA (Psychotherapy), UKCP Registered Psychotherapist, Certified Play Therapist

Therapy using sand-tray is a creative way for adults to resolve emotional difficulties without having to talk in detail about those difficulties.

It involves the person using intuition to choose and place natural objects or miniatures in a blue-bottomed shallow box filled with sand. The person has hundreds of objects to choose from and can add more or take some out of the sand at any stage in the process.

While this is happening, the therapist carefully observes the person. After the objects are placed, they talk about what has been created in the sand-tray. They decide together whether or not to move one or more of the objects.

Sand-tray is known as the 'silent therapy'. It can be very peaceful, relaxing and enjoyable. It has a 'Wow!' factor because it can sometimes result in positive emotional changes in the client without much conscious effort.

Case Study:

Maud was happily married with two children, a boy and a girl. When her daughter reached the age of seven Maud started having irrational fears about her daughter's safety. She also found it difficult to be intimate with her husband. Lovemaking became a chore when it had previously been a pleasure. Finally it reached a stage where even her husband's touch caused her to shudder. She knew she needed therapy.

There was a blank spot in Maud's childhood from age seven to nine that she had always puzzled about. She had vague memories about a male babysitter at the time but nothing that she could

put into words.

Over several sessions in therapy using sand-tray Maud created some beautiful scenes – gardens, seashores, mountains.

Then, in one sand-tray of a garden, she put a little dinosaur hiding behind a bush. The therapist gently pointed it out. Over several more sessions, the 'monsters' in the sand-tray increased in number until they dominated and destroyed everything else.

One day Maud arrived for her session with a determination on her face. Tentatively she placed an armed soldier in the empty tray, then another. Soon she had a whole row of soldiers. Next came wild animals – lions, tigers, leopards – lined up as if for battle.

She had vague memories about a male babysitter at the time but nothing she could put into words.

Finally, at the other end of the tray, she placed the first little dinosaur that had appeared many sessions ago. The rest of the figures moved in and 'destroyed' the dinosaur.

The battles continued for many weeks, becoming more fierce as the monsters increased in number. Finally, in the fiercest battle of all, she finished by burying all the monsters under a huge mound of sand with a cross ('for a gravestone') placed on top.

Outside the therapy room, Maud was becoming more

relaxed about her daughter. 'Normally anxious,' she described it.



Her lovemaking had returned to its previous level, much to her husband's delight.

Maud had changed her thinking, feeling, behaviour and attitude without ever knowing or talking about what happened in her childhood 'blank spot'. That's the effect of therapy using sand-play.

Creative Therapy at Olive Branch

At Olive Branch Counselling we have a sand-tray and many different figures and objects to be used with it. Several of our counsellors have a particular interest in creative ways of helping their clients, of which sand-tray work is one.

We also have pots of play-dough, soft toys and dolls, paints, crayons, felt-tip pens, shells, pebbles, buttons, a collection of hats, and a beautiful dolls-house.

All of these have been used at various times to help our clients, with very beneficial results.



Freedom From Fear

Recently I have become more aware of one of the most powerful emotions that can stunt our lives or even imprison us—and that is FEAR.

How often are we afraid, when a stranger approaches us, or when people expect something of us that we can't give? We fear letting people down, being noticed, being a failure, being exposed, we fear our own inadequacy, we fear the truth, we fear fear itself, we fear death, we fear being alone...the list is endless.

In the Bible when God's messengers the angels showed up, often the first thing they said was "Fear not...do not be afraid."

I remember going on a favourite walk by a small stream. Some had chucked a traffic cone into it near a footbridge; brackish water had started to collect around it, along with bits of paper, plastic, leaves and sticks.

I felt sad that the stream no longer flowed peacefully under the bridge and that the course of the water was obstructed. I resolved to come back and sort it out. For a few days after that it rained heavily, so that the wa-

ter rose, cascading over the bridge, making it impossible to cross, and dangerous to wade into the stream.

I waited a few more days, and set out again to un-dam the stream....to my amazement I saw when I got there that it had been done for me.

This incident spoke volumes to me. There were many issues in my life that I was not willing to face, and they had become like the rubbish accumulating in the stream, clogging up

I felt sad that the stream no longer flowed peacefully under the bridge.....

the water, preventing it from flowing freely. As a Christian I already believed that Jesus had taken all the rubbish of our lives and dealt with it on the cross. I needed to be reminded of this. It is so easy to be caught up in guilt and shame, forgetting that God has already forgiven us

I sought counselling, and through a gradual process of being listened to, respected and accepted as I was, the issues were brought out into the open, and fears faced and put into perspec-

tive.

As I was writing this a verse from the Bible came into my mind:

"Jesus said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in



me...rivers of living water will flow from within them.'" (Jn 7:37-38)

Jesus also said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Counselling is one way of facing our fears and dealing with them—and the answers may not always be what we expect. Sometimes the hardest task is the first one—of picking up the phone and asking for help.

Jean
(Olive Branch counsellor)

Some Facts and Figures

These are our client statistics for the year ended 30 September 2009:

During this period we had 33 referrals, of whom 24 were women, 5 were men and there were 4 couples. There were 21 Christians and 12 non-Christians.

Number of referrals by age:

18-20	1
21-30	8
31-40	13
41-50	5
51-60	6
60 +	0

The most common presenting problem was relationship difficulties,

mostly but not exclusively with a partner or spouse. Depression was a close second. Other presenting problems included abuse, anger management, past issues, mostly from childhood, and problems at work.

Our referrals come from a number of sources, the main one being the medical profession, mostly from doctors, but also from NHS Direct, nurses, psychiatrists and community psychiatric nurses. A

number came as a result of recommendation from former clients and

from churches.

Geographically, most clients came from Chippenham, a number from surrounding villages and some from as far afield as Swindon.

During the year we counselled 35 clients for a total of 433 sessions.

I am very grateful to our counsellors and support group for their commitment to this valuable work.

Counselling Manager





A confidential counselling service for adults in the North Wiltshire area.

Olive Branch Counselling is a counselling service based in central Chippenham.

We are a registered charity, and we are funded entirely by donations, gifts and grants. We receive no statutory funding at all, and all of our counsellors give of their time and skills free of charge. Like all voluntary groups we are feeling the effects of the recession.

We are keen to secure our future by developing regular sources of income, and to this end we have devised the scheme we call "Friends of Olive Branch".

A Friend commits to giving regularly, on a monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or annual basis, and receives our newsletter and regular updates about our work, as well as being invited to social events and to our AGM in November.

If you are interested in finding out more, please call us initially, on 01249 443810, and our Treasurer will be in contact with you very soon.

Olive Branch FAQ

Q. Do you counsel children or teenagers?

A. Counselling children and teenagers requires specialist training and facilities. At this time we counsel those over the age of 18.

Q. Are your counsellors qualified?

A. All of our counsellors are trained and have completed as a minimum, certificate courses in Counselling Skills. Some also have a Diploma in Counselling and several are currently studying for a Diploma. Most have many years of counselling experience.

Q. How much does it cost?

A. We do not charge a set fee but ask you to contribute what you can afford. We ask for £5 to put you on our waiting-list and this is deducted from the cost of your first session. No one is turned away

because of an inability to pay.

Q. Do I need to be referred by a doctor or CPN?

A. No, you can contact us directly, by phone or email.

Q. Will you tell my doctor I am having counselling?

A. We would never do this without your permission, and only if we were concerned about your health and state of mind.

No one else needs to know that you are having counselling unless you choose to tell them.

Q. Do I have to be a Christian?

A. No, we see people of all faiths or none, and we do not impose our beliefs on you. We are here to help

you to face whatever problems you are struggling with, and there will be no 'religious' talk unless you decide you want that to be part of your counselling.

Q. Do you only offer a few sessions?

A. We offer six sessions to begin with, and then we review how the counselling is going. If you want to continue on and have more sessions you can do so, and many of our clients stay in counselling for several months.

Some people need longer than this, and stay for much longer. We are committed to you and to the counselling process, however long it takes.

