

Boyd & Associates serving the community for 43 years.



Age-Related Hearing Loss and Mental Health

Maureen Chapman M.A., R.C.C.

Mary is 67 and she came in to discuss her fear that her 69-year-old husband had something terribly wrong with his behaviour.

She noted that he was experiencing depression, irritability, isolation, confusion, anxiety and, at times, what appeared to be unprovoked rage. He would interrupt people and exhibited what appeared to be extreme self-centeredness. At times he seemed paranoid, wondering if people were talking about him. His self-esteem had plummeted and he appeared awkward when socializing. These were not behaviours that had been prevalent years prior.

She confirmed that when she would ask him questions, she would receive odd responses that had nothing to do with the questions she had asked. If he was asked to do something he would respond with an affirmative response, but not follow through.

He also at times would lose his balance, thus avoiding physical activities that he once enjoyed.

He insisted nothing was wrong with him and refused to go to the doctor. The arguments between the two of them were escalating.

What I have noticed over the years, when I hear this complaint, is that there is a strong likelihood that this described behaviour may have to do with hearing loss.

I have now had the opportunity to refer numerous clients back to their family physician who have referred their patient to an Audiologist or ENT specialist to have their hearing checked. I have been fortunate to receive feedback that in fact, it was the hearing loss that had impacted so many areas of their life.

continued on page 2



Anxiety Protects You - But it Can Over Protect

Simon Hearn, Ph.D., R.Psych.

Everyone feels anxiety at times, and when a real threat -- like a truck is barreling your way -- is present, you ought to feel anxious!

But for many people who lack strong inner security, anxiety becomes like an alarm that trips too easily. You're tensing up and feeling nervous about this, that and the other thing, yet your logical mind knows you're over-reacting.

According to Dr. Richard Schwartz, author of Internal Family Systems Therapy, that over-reactivity is protecting your most vulnerable self, called the Lost Child, and making sure s/he isn't hurt again. The Lost Child is your original, naïve childhood self who, having been hurt enough times, retreated behind a safety wall, and your system protects him/her as much as possible, from being hurt again. Anything that reminds your system of past hurts and dangers is steered away from. So, if I had a mean mother, I would avoid mean-seeming women, just as someone who's been in a car accident wants to avoid driving. Hiding out from all the bad things, I will huddle in a safety zone, sticking to safe people and places.

But that gets boring. Sure, I'm safe but I can't grow, experiment, try new things, meet new kinds of people.

continued on page 2



Also In This Issue

- Retirement Successpage 3
- Masking and Autism.....page 4

Boyd & Associates Counselling Inc.

202 - 1046 Austin Avenue, Coquitlam, BC V3K 3P3
www.boydcounselling.com/www.psychhealth.com

Age-Related Hearing Loss and Mental Health *continued from front cover*

The point to be taken here is the importance of not ruling out a physiological reason for the changes in behaviour.

The National Institute on aging has noted that 1/3 of individuals between the ages of 65-74 suffer from hearing loss. While this may be expected, people affected do not often recognize that it is their hearing loss that is impacting their mood and relationships.

When you lose some or all of your hearing, the part of your brain that stays active when processing sounds can start to atrophy or deteriorate. This in turn can cause cognitive decline.

It is paramount to ensure that hearing loss is not overlooked as a possibility for the noted changes in a loved one's behaviour or activities.

Early action is a necessity, since when hearing loss is left untreated it can worsen the described behaviours listed above.

The following are strategies to address:

- Visit a health care professional who may be able to diagnose your condition or they can refer you to another professional who can evaluate your situation and help you explore your options.
- Surround yourself with knowledge and support. Ex: Canadian Hearing Services
- The Journal of the American Medical Association (2020) found that the use of hearing aids greatly reduced the risk of psychological distress from hearing loss.

Hearing loss does not have to define you or prevent you from a full and happy life. With the understanding of the factors behind some of the changes you have experienced as a result of hearing loss can come the compassion for yourself in recognizing the difficulties you have faced. Not only that, but it can assist your loved ones to develop compassion for the struggles you have experienced.

It is paramount to ensure that hearing loss is not overlooked as a possibility for the noted changes in a loved one's behaviour or activities.

Anxiety Protects You - But it Can Over Protect *continued from front cover*

It's more like I'm in a safety jail. I'm going to need to gather my courage, and break out of that jail, saying "I'll take my chances that I can handle these things that I've considered scary."

That powerful moment is essential for growth. Remember, your logical mind knows that a lot of the things you fear aren't as bad as they claim. Your mind has just been operating an alarm system that's based on, "Better safe than sorry."

If I was in a car accident and was hit by a red truck, now I want to avoid all red vehicles. But I also know that that's illogical: it wasn't the colour that caused the accident. So I can say, fear or no fear, I need to take charge of myself, and stop being controlled by things that make me unnecessarily anxious. I need to become the Captain of my ship. As Captain, I'll decide what's truly threatening and what's not. To the anxious, over-protective part, I'll say: take it easy, you've been overdoing it.

Confidence in my adult, reasonable, Captain self grows when I can feel nervous and then say, "Sorry anxiety, you're blowing up something minor into something major. You're trying to tell me there's danger all around when there isn't really any." If something dangerous did come up, I'd rather have my grownup, executive self dealing with it than my scared self.

Anxiety is monotonous, going off like a car alarm when it's just a passing breeze, getting you worked up, in a dull, automatic fashion.

Perhaps when you're at your paid job, you are sensible, reasonable, and intelligent, but at home you're a worrywart. The fact that you can be that reasonable, competent person at work shows you have it in you to take command of anxiety at home. Not saying you should be 100% strong and confident all the time, but that your

Captain self should be in charge the majority of the time. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy helps you look at the exaggerated anxieties and question them from more grounded realism: is it really true in the bright light of day, that Nobody likes you? Do you really have to help everyone you know, always putting yourself last? Should you really try to be perfect, when that state doesn't exist? Get unhooked from these panicky shoulds and exaggerations that run your life.

Internal Family Systems Therapy helps you get in touch with your Lost Child, develop your Captain self, and keep overprotective anxiety on the back burner.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is excellent for cutting painful experiences and anxieties down to size. It works quickly, as it helps the fearful, hurt self to be talked down off the ledge and to replace anxiety with balanced, realistic responses. EMDR can also be used to build up the confident Captain self. The results obtained present you with a new level of self-assurance from then on.

Become the bigger person, and put anxiety in its place!





Retirement Success

Denis Boyd, R.Psych..

Baby Boomers (born in 1946 onwards to 1965) are either working full or part time, fully retired or in the process of retiring....depending on their circumstances or goals.

Tom worked as a banker for years and now, in his mid 60s, is happily working at a brewery. Others in his generation enjoy their longstanding careers, but retirement is in their thoughts and plans.

Successful retirees seem to have a formula they follow, a formula which is unique to each person but with some overlap in common. For instance, many who enjoy good health travel several times a year. Cruises suit some and others prefer walking tours.

Adjusting to not working can be challenging, as the initial novelty initially wears off and a variety of feelings start to surface. The Boomer generation was never taught how to openly manage emotions, and the arrival of these feelings can be intimidating. As mentioned in "Boomer Upgrade," accepting emotions and sharing them can be liberating. Talking them over or writing them down can have immediate benefits.

Healthy retirees create new structure in their daily lives.

Healthy retirees create new structure in their daily lives. Simple tasks can become a comfortable daily routine, along with chores, reading, walking or regular commitments of various types. Structure existed in our work lives and offers the same benefit for those of us leaving the work force.

Movement is crucial for physical and mental health. Walking around the neighbourhood can be easy to accomplish on a regular basis. Park walks are a positive alternative, as exposure to nature brings increased mental health benefits. Forest bathing, or shinrin-yoku in Japanese, is a practice of immersing oneself in a forest environment to promote relaxation and well-being through mindful sensory connection with nature, (not taking a literal bath!).

Relationships are crucial as well. Interacting with others regularly is seen to be a major key to a healthy retirement. Family relationships carry the most impact, particularly those involving grandchildren. When visiting with friends of the same age, avoid the temptation to compare ailments.

Instead of focusing on aging challenges, focus on the present moment and the peace that results. Early in life we all experienced a strong sense of curiosity. Re-kindling curiosity towards a spouse, as well as the changes which come with aging or life in general, can assist with living in the present moment.

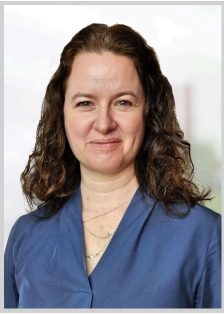
Let us return to the topic feelings for a moment, as many emotions can arise as older friends suffer losses in their lives or die themselves. Bob and Sara had health issues which caused them to narrow their activities, which then altered their friendship contacts. However, they were able to talk about their upset and looked for creative ways to adapt, such as using Zoom to connect with friends. Sara also found it helpful to write down in her journal what she was experiencing and found this provided a sense of release.

Interacting with others regularly is seen to be a major key to a healthy retirement.

Success in life, as in retirement, can be strongly bolstered by laughing often. This is the time of life where one has the time to really celebrate our sense of humour and sense of fun. Oh yes....and don't forget curiosity.

A little humour





Masking and Autism: How to Create Space for Acceptance and Authenticity

Tarama Williams, Ph.D., R.Psych.

Most of us are familiar the social skill of masking. Think about a job interview—you dress a certain way, watch your posture, choose your words carefully, and observe the reactions of those around you more carefully. Most people find these experiences tiring and and are happy to come home, relax and just be themselves.

Imagine if you had to mask not just for a few hours, but for years - or even most of your life. Imagine constantly receiving the message that your true self isn't acceptable, that you must always adjust to make others comfortable. This, sadly, is often the reality of many autistic people, especially the ones who are diagnosed later in life.

Long-term masking is exhausting and can lead to burnout, depression, and other struggles. The long-term feedback that you are not good enough for others as you are, is devastating. Some of my clients have never had the chance to explore who they are without the mask. Sometimes, the best gift we can give the autistic people in our lives is the freedom to be themselves—without judgment or pressure to change for our comfort. Here are some ideas to help create safety so the autistic people in your life can embrace who they are without the mask.

- 1. Get comfortable with stimming:** Stimming is a natural way to regulate our feelings. Most people do it occasionally when they experience a strong feeling. Think about the jumping and arm flapping of *Price is Right* contestants when they are called to the stage or the rocking of a grieving person. Autistic people are often more in touch with their body's need for movement and use stimming regularly as a coping tool. Being asked to be still or stop flapping is also a request for them to mask and not be themselves. Supporting and loving our autistic friends means recognizing stimming as a valid form of self-regulation, celebrating its role in their well-being, and creating space for it without judgment.
- 2. Eye contact is not the only way to show respect:** Autistic people often find eye contact exhausting or overwhelming. While there may be social situations where eye contact is expected, allowing them to look where they feel most comfortable is essential for authentic communication. It can be helpful to understand that avoiding eye contact does not mean they are not listening, or not interested.
- 3. Be aware of environmental stressors:** Many autistic people find sensory stimulation to be stressful, making it difficult to focus or be themselves. Understanding which noises, sensations, or lighting conditions are challenging for them to manage and creating a safe space without these stressors, is a meaningful way to offer support and help them feel at ease.
- 4. Be gentle and go slowly:** If someone has faced rejection for who they are, unmasking can feel overwhelming and difficult. Let them change at a pace that works for them. Offering gentle reassurance that they are safe to be their authentic self if and when they choose. If you've been less open in the past, acknowledging this and offering an apology can help build trust and create a more supportive environment.

Autism offers a unique way of experiencing and engaging with the world. Embracing and supporting autistic individuals as they are allows them to thrive and grow in wonderful ways. It also enriches your relationship with them and our society as a whole.

Autism offers a unique way of experiencing and engaging with the world. Embracing and supporting autistic individuals as they are allows them to thrive and grow in wonderful ways. It also enriches your relationship with them and our society as a whole.



BOYD & associates
PSYCHOLOGISTS & COUNSELLORS

202-1046 Austin Ave. Coquitlam, BC V3K 3P3
Phone: 604-931-7211 Fax: 604-931-7288
www.boydcounselling.com

David Aboussafy, Ph.D.,R.Psych. #1475
Bob Armstrong, M.A.,R.C.C. #1129
Diana Ayres, M.A.,R.C.C. #12224
Jean-Claude Bazinet, M.A.,R.C.C. #1034
Chris Boyd, M.A.,R.C.C. #4066
Denis Boyd, M.A.,R.Psych. #0399
Joanna Boyd, M.C.P.,R.C.C. #11495
Maureen Chapman, M.A.,R.C.C. #2470
Bryan Duggan, Psy.D.,R.Psych. #2808
Sandon Fraser, M.A.,R.C.C. #18367
Simon Hearn, Ph.D.,R.Psych. #1194
Don Lasell, M.A.,R.C.C. #1083
Brooke Lewis, Psy.D.,R.C.C. #3332
David Lindskoog, M.A.,R.C.C. #11784
Alivia Maric, Ph.D.,R.Psych. #1044
Shawn Marsolais, M.A.,R.C.C. #12479
Nancy Michel, M.A.,R.Psych. #0477
Anita Natarajan, MD
Angela Post, Ph.D.,R.Psych. #1546
Joan Schultz, Ph.D.,R.Psych. #1724
Tamara Williams, Ph.D.,R.Psych. #2197