



A New Dimension Behavioral Health

Michaele McGinnis treats health-related conditions, adds biofeedback and hypnosis to agency's service offerings

Biofeedback and hypnosis are two of the treatment options Michaele McGinnis, LICSW, BCIAC, brings to JFS clients. A family and individual counselor with more than 25 years of traditional counseling experience, Michaele is also a certified provider of biofeedback treatment, which can be effective treatments for stress, insomnia, chronic pain and other ailments.

She joined the JFS staff on April 1 after a 16-year tenure in the Division of Behavioral Medicine at Fallon Healthcare System, Inc., of Worcester, and another 10 years in private and group practice.



Michaele's expertise is particularly valuable in this economy. There are clear associations between financial stress and job loss with an increase in psychiatric symptoms and somatic illness. This may affect how people act at home and their relationships with family members. Some resort to counterproductive ways to cope with the added stress, such as drinking or eating more, retreating to isolation or lashing out.

"Balance and 'connecting the dots' are crucial parts of a healthy life," says Michaele. "I'm particularly interested in exploring the cultures of the unique groups we're each a part of - our families, social and other associations – as a way of understanding how and why we behave as we do. It's this kind of understanding that helps me help my clients."

"Michaele's clinical experience in both traditional counseling and behavioral medicine offer our clients a unique approach to treating family and individual stress, anxiety, chronic pain, fibromyalgia, insomnia, chronic headache, cardiac disease and other often debilitating symptoms," said JFS Executive Director Steve Slaten. "And her fluency in Spanish adds another important dimension to the agency's diverse capabilities."

Michaele's work includes treatment of individuals, couples and families, including children and adolescents. Her expertise also includes treatment of panic, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), obsessive compulsive disorder and marital conflict. In addition, she is experienced in addressing sexual trauma and cross-cultural issues.

"JFS is a welcoming provider of family and individual therapies, and I look forward to collaborating with its highly regarded clinical staff and the opportunity to learn from each other for the benefit of our clients," McGinnis said. Along with Michaele, JFS clinicians Amy Colangelo, LICSW, and Elaine Kapperman, LICSW, specialize in treating anxiety, stress, and health related conditions in children and adults.

Biofeedback Specialist

"How we think about something has a big impact on our bodies, but we often overlook this relationship," she adds. "Problems such as traumatic injury, chronic pain, and family dynamics can lead to serious anxiety, depression, eating disorders and other problems."

One treatment for these conditions, biofeedback, is a technique in which clients are trained to improve their health by learning to control certain internal bodily processes that normally occur involuntarily, such as heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension and skin temperature. These activities can be measured with electrodes and displayed on a monitor viewable by both the patient and the health-care provider.

The monitor provides feedback to the participant about the internal workings of his or her body. The person can then be taught to use this information to gain control over these "involuntary" activities.

"Biofeedback and hypnosis have enabled many of my clients to address very serious symptoms that traditional counseling treatments have not helped," she says. "These approaches are useful tools in the portfolio of behavioral health treatments I bring to JFS clients. For individuals, including elders, couples and families, they can be the answer to problems that other approaches simply don't solve."

