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CONFERENCE CURRENTS



Erica Jong (middle) with Judi Goldstein, MSS, LSW, vice president of The Renfrew Center Foundation and conference chair, and Sam Menaged, JD, founder and president of The Renfrew Centers and The Renfrew Center Foundation

2006 RENFREW WRAP-UP

By D. Milton Stokes, MPH, RD, CDN

Imagine attending a conference with an out-of-this-world speaker. What would it be like? Who would you expect? My game plan for conferences isn't so much a focus on the speakers but rather on the opportunities to reconnect with colleagues from far-flung locales, cultivate networks, and build new alliances. But this time—at the Renfrew Center Conference in Philadelphia—I was thrilled with the speakers and blown away by one in particular: Evelyn Tribole, MS, RD. More about her later.

Following a feminist approach, The Renfrew Center is known internationally for its collaborative, interactive, and personal treatment style. They utilize a variety of talk therapies, including cognitive, psychodynamic, humanistic, and systems theory, as well as experiential ones, such as movement, art, music, and psychodrama. Of course, they also employ nutrition counseling and consultation by RDs. Renfrew Centers are located in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Florida, and they provide residential treatment, transitional living, day treatment, and out-patient therapy.

This year marked the 16th Annual Renfrew Center Foundation Conference: "Feminist Perspectives and Beyond: Maximizing Change in the Treatment of Eating Disorders." Speakers presented on topics that included treatment interventions; the connection between genetics and psychology; motivational interviewing; spirituality; holistic medicine; mother-daughter relationships; ethics and legal issues in eating disorders; advocacy; and binge

eating and how it differs from obesity. With such a vast array available in only a few days, participants found the task of choosing lectures and presentations challenging.

Day one for me opened with a workshop led by Tribole. Truly someone who ranks among the top three nutrition and health speakers I've ever heard, Tribole has a private nutrition practice in Irvine, Calif., and is coauthor of *Intuitive Eating: A Revolutionary Program That Works* (second edition; St. Martin's Griffin, 2003). Furthermore, she's a name we should all know. Tribole presented "What Do You Mean It's Healthy to Eat Chocolate and French Fries? Intuitive Eating in the Treatment of Eating Disorders," an all-day workshop on the intuitive eating model.

Listening to Tribole and observing her dynamic, engaging style, I couldn't help but thank her for her work and message. After all, with a conference devoted to a heavy-duty topic such as eating disorders, holding an audience's attention all day in a packed, warm room says a lot. Perhaps the best part was her regular peppering of real-life examples from her own practice in nutrition counseling. She shared instances when patients presented certain issues along with her response.

With 10 core principles, intuitive eating is about harmonizing people with food and helping them realize that they are in charge of their body. That food is indeed powerless over people goes without saying and is a central message of intuitive eating. Some specific principles include rejecting the diet mentality—that dichotomous all-or-nothing thinking that actually leads to weight gain; honoring true hunger; challenging food police; feeling and respecting fullness; coping with emotions without using or abusing food; and health and body respect. To learn more about the 10

principles and Tribole's work, visit www.intuitiveeating.com.

After the full-day workshop, the conference opened with shorter educational sessions. One I attended was hosted by a psychotherapist-attorney who reviewed ethical and legal issues surrounding patients with eating disorders. In her session, "What Do I Do Now? An Ethical and Legal Framework for Promoting Lasting Change," Dea Silbertrust, PhD, JD, shared a variety of codes of ethics, such as ones from the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Association of Social Workers, and she discussed core values of beneficence, fidelity, integrity, and justice. After recognizing that some professionals do not maintain patient files of services provided, she strongly encouraged everyone to take notes within a patient's record when ethical dilemmas exist and contemporaneously document conversations regarding these dilemmas with the patient. Apart from this, professionals should seek consultation with others to obtain broad-based perspectives in treatment for ethical challenges.

Next, I attended "The Therapist-Nutritionist Relationship in Addressing Compulsive Exercise" by Molly Kellogg, RD, LCSW, and Suzanne Girard Eberle, MS, RD. The speakers characterized excessive exercise and reviewed the intersection of this form of abuse with eating disorders. They then reviewed how an RD/nutritionist and psychotherapist can work together to treat a patient with an eating disorder.

Researchers from the New York Obesity Research Center, which is one of the 28 federally funded clinical nutrition centers affiliated with the National Institutes of Health, Jennifer Nasser, PhD, RD, and Allan Getiebter, PhD (psychologist), addressed the differentiation of obesity and binge eating disorder. After reviewing genetic and hormonal components of binge eating, the team discussed their research and specific case studies, as well as increased disinhibition and decreased inhibition in this population.

Apart from the purely educational sessions, the Renfrew Conference included ample opportunities for networking. Clinicians and participants from specific geographies and/or professional backgrounds met over breakfast to get to know each other and develop new relationships. Renfrew also offered social events, including a comedy performance and a dance, exercise sessions for the attendees to relax and for health promotion, and a private screening of the controversial HBO documentary *Thin*. Various authors and authorities in eating disorders were also on hand for book signings and interaction.

As a first-time attendee, I now know there's a yearly conference that must be on my list of to-dos for continued professional growth. Whether you specialize in eating disorders or just want to learn more for that occasional patient, Renfrew Center programs are essential for nutrition professionals.

— D. Milton Stokes, MPH, RD, CDN, owns One Source Nutrition, LLC in southern Connecticut and is a freelance writer.



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