



# THE WTC RESPONDER HEALTH WATCH

Clinical Center at UMDNJ

Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

## Mental Health Services at EOHSI-UMDNJ

**WE MAKE REFERRALS** for 9/11 responders who can benefit from treatment to recommended practitioners who are experienced and well-trained clinicians. They are located throughout New Jersey, Staten Island and other parts of New York State, and Pennsylvania. If a responder who has moved to a more distant state, we locate a professional who is experienced in working with responder issues and make a referral.

Absolute confidentiality is maintained. The treatment is a process that is solely between patient and therapist.

Joanne Dailey, LCSW, is our on-staff mental health practitioner. She has been with our program for over two years and meets with responders for assessment, counseling and referrals to psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists. Ms. Dailey has 25 years experience helping people manage anxiety, depression, relationship issues and post-traumatic stress disorder.

She can be reached at 732-445-0123 X 647 or via e-mail at [jdailey@eohsi.rutgers.edu](mailto:jdailey@eohsi.rutgers.edu).

Two doctoral psychology interns, Bianca Georgescu and Will Folberth, provide support to the clinic's mental health services. Bianca and Will assist with patient assessment and referrals.



Joanne Dailey, LCSW (left) and Will Folberth, psychology doctoral intern

## FACTS AND MYTHS ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

**MYTH** Mental health issues are not true medical issues. People who have mental illness are just “crazy.”

**FACT** Mental disorders can have both genetic and biological causes. Personal life experiences have an effect on body chemistry and on the brain itself, sometimes overstimulating certain parts of the brain.

**MYTH** Mental health problems are caused by the person suffering them.

**FACT** We do need to take responsibility for our thoughts, feelings and behaviors, but we are not to blame. Being responsible means getting help for whatever mental health problem may be present in our lives. Emotional well-being helps us work, live and socialize with others in a positive way.

**MYTH** Counseling and psychotherapy take forever.

**FACT** Treatment can be short-term and solution-oriented. There are several approaches in treatment, such as talk therapy, psycho-education, cognitive behavioral

therapy, and integrative holistic work which includes breathing techniques, meditation, acupuncture, yoga and other body work, relaxation techniques. Medication may also be a part of the treatment.

**MYTH** I can handle my own mental health issues and therefore don't need help.

**FACT** When problems become chronic or even worsen despite your efforts to cope, that is a strong indication that additional help is needed—asking for help is a positive step! You are not weak if you seek support for mental health issues.

**MYTH** Emotional issues are just temporary and won't affect me for the long term.

**FACT** Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety affect not only our emotional well-being but can affect our physical health. They can sometimes cause muscle tension, headaches, body aches, stomach and gastro-intestinal ailments, racing heart, and shortness of breath. Emotional states send signals that change body chemistry, thereby affecting organs, muscles, nerves—the whole body!

## PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

**TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES CAN** cause people to suffer from PTSD. When we are exposed to traumatic situations, we initially feel psychologically shocked. PTSD is the continuation of that state of shock, sometimes well beyond the original trauma.

Signs of PTSD are:

- Sleep Problems/nightmares
- Feeling fearful or numb
- Remembering the trauma over and over
- Irritability
- Depression
- Feeling alone, isolating from others
- Re-experiencing the trauma

We can be re-shocked by present-day reminders of the trauma, triggering a strong emotional response. We are psychologically, physically and emotionally reliving the experience.

PTSD is readily treatable using Trauma Focused Cognitive-Behavioral therapy. This type of therapy helps identify upsetting thoughts about the trauma and then will replace these thoughts with a more balanced view of the trauma.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is helpful for PTSD. Using eye movements or other types of stimulation, the treatment will “unfreeze” the brain from intense emotional states related to the original trauma. EMDR helps the memory of trauma become more cohesive and reduces the emotional response that is triggered by the memory.

Sometimes family therapy is recommended as PTSD can affect everyone around you. Medication is sometimes prescribed for depression and anxiety. These are secondary symptoms of PTSD.

**What you can do:**

- Reach out for help
- Challenge your sense of helplessness
- Help others by volunteering, reach out to a friend
- Take positive action