

Services Provided:

- Individual therapy
- Group therapy
- Pre-surgical evaluations
- Psychological evaluations



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Welcome to Colorado Health Psychology!



Welcome! I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and my practice to you. My name is Dr. Melanie S. Weitzenfeld, and I am a licensed Psychologist in the State of Colorado (License #3106). I earned my B.A. in Psychology from Claremont McKenna College and continued on to earn both an

M.S. and a Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Southern California. My primary area of interest lies in the interaction between psychological and medical conditions. I have worked with patients diagnosed with various medical conditions, including but not limited to chronic pain, multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, irritable bowel syndrome, hepatitis, infertility, post-partum depression, and obesity. In addition to behavioral health, I also work with depression, anxiety, phase of life issues, grief and loss, relationship difficulties, and adjustment issues.

I believe it is important to understand the nature of the issues on multiple levels (e.g., physical, psychological, behavioral, social, spiritual). Out of this depth of

understanding the issues and the context in which they emerge, effective strategies and interventions can be developed.

Psychotherapy can help:

- Lessen the emotional impact of illness
- Reduce stress, anxiety, and depression
- Reduce visits to physicians and hospital stays
- Manage pain and adverse side effects
- Increase well-being and quality-of-life
- Improve relationships with others
- Create meaning from illness

This is the first of our monthly CHP newsletters. Please feel free to email us with topic requests, questions, etc. for future issues.

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What is health psychology?

Health psychology views physical health and illness as the product of a combination of factors including biological characteristics (e.g., genetic predisposition), behavioral factors (e.g., lifestyle, stress, health beliefs), and social conditions (e.g., cultural influences, family relationships, support). This conceptualization is

known as the biopsychosocial model. Health psychologists consider the roles of thoughts, emotions, behavior, and social context in health promotion and maintenance, illness prevention, and treatment, as well as in understanding the etiology/causes of health and illness. Health psychology uses the knowledge

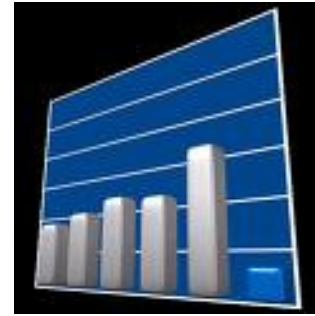
and ideas from psychology to cut down on health risk factors and promote healthy behaviors. Methods of health psychology include psychotherapy, education, relaxation training, and meditation.

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Health Psychology Statistics

- 93 percent of Americans say that perceptions, thoughts, and choices affect physical health (APA national poll, 2005)
- Two-thirds of all office visits to family physicians are due to stress-related symptoms (American Academy of Family Physicians)
- 58 percent of Americans believe that one can't have good physical health without good mental health (APA national poll, 2005)
- High levels of hostility have been found to predict heart disease more often than high cholesterol, cigarette smoking, or obesity (Health Psychology, November 2002)
- 43 percent of all adults suffer adverse health effects from stress ("The Stress Solution: An Action Plan to Manage the Stress in Your Life", Lyle H. Miller, Ph.D., and Alma Dell Smith, Ph.D.)
- More than 1/3 of Americans say they have had an illness that was primarily caused by stress (APA national poll, 2005)
- 43 percent of all adults suffer adverse health effects from stress ("The Stress Solution: An Action Plan to Manage the Stress in Your Life", Lyle H. Miller, Ph.D., and Alma Dell Smith, Ph.D.)
- Men high in optimism were less than half as likely to develop heart disease than were the more pessimistic men (Veterans Administration Normative Aging Study)
- More than 1/3 of Americans say they have had an illness that was primarily caused by stress (APA 2005)
- People with high levels of anxiety can have between two to seven times the risk of heart disease. ("Emotional Longevity: What Really Determines How Long You Live," Norman B. Anderson and Elizabeth P. Anderson, 2003)
- Consumers report that talk therapy was reportedly more effective than drug therapy for depression and anxiety (Consumer Reports, October 2004)
- 78 percent of Americans said they would go to a psychologist if he/she could help manage stress



Depression and Physical Health

The comorbidity of mental and physical health problems is well documented, especially when illness becomes chronic. Depression may be a normal, healthy reaction to illness; however the depression may become severe enough to warrant its own treatment.

Symptoms of depression include:

- Change in sleep
- Loss of interest in activities that were previously enjoyed
- Increased feelings of guilt
- Decreased energy
- Difficulty with concentration
- Change in appetite
- Psychomotor retardation
- Suicidal ideation

It can be difficult to differentiate whether some of these symptoms are a result of depression, the illness itself, or side effects from medications.

Although a person can develop depression in association with almost any physical illness, some diseases are more likely to lead to depression than others. Parkinson's disease, dementia, and multiple sclerosis are all conditions of the nervous system in which depression is more likely to occur. Vascular conditions with higher rates of depression include heart disease, stroke, and hypertension. Hy-



pothyroidism and Cushing's syndrome are endocrine disorders with higher incidence of depression. Certain viral infections (mononucleosis and influenza) are prone to trigger depression in vulnerable individuals. Certain types of medications are associated with higher rates of depression as well. For example, calcium channel blockers (eg., nifedipine, nimodipine, verapamil), beta-blockers (eg., propranolol, atenolol, metoprolol), corticosteroids (eg., dexamethasone, hydrocortisone), and levodopa (eg., madopar, sinemet) are all medications associated with a higher risk of depression.