



New Psychotherapist To Launch Anger Management and Women's Family Violence Groups

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November 6 2023 1:49 PM

ALTON – OSF Saint Anthony’s Health Center continues its focused efforts expanding resources in addressing the mental health and well-being of residents in the Riverbend region. Beginning the week of November 27, OSF Saint Anthony’s Psychological Services department will launch two new education groups within its Connections Adult Group Series.



On Tuesday, November 28, from 10 a.m. – 11 a.m., the Women's Family Violence Group will begin its weekly meeting schedule providing a supportive and safe environment for women who are experiencing verbal or physical abuse from a significant other or family member or are recovering from the trauma of past domestic violence. The Women's Family Violence Group covers safety planning and resources, family dynamics, and healthy coping skills. Preferred age range for female participants is 18 years old and above.

That same week on Thursday, November 30, 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m., the Anger Management Group will begin meeting on a weekly basis to provide an educational, supportive environment for individuals seeking to decrease the frequency and intensity of their anger, build healthier coping skills and more positive relationships. The Anger Management Group will focus on triggers, de-escalation techniques, and conflict management. Open to both male and female participants, the preferred age range is 18 years old and above.

Both groups will be led by Vanna Lenhardt, a licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC), the newest addition to the psychotherapy team within the hospital's Psychological Services department. Lenhardt brings 10 years of individual and group counseling experience while serving at Group Interventions (Troy, IL), BJC Behavioral Health (St. Louis, MO) and Caritas Family Solutions in Madison County, IL.

"I love hearing the success stories – when a person has found peace, healing, or growth, it is always rewarding to have been a part of their journey," Lenhardt says when discussing what she enjoys the most about her work. "I approach everyone with an open heart, meeting them where they are, and being willing to go above and beyond to lift up others."

Gender-based violence takes many forms: physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological. Two of the most prevalent types of violence that women experience are intimate partner violence (IPV) and non-partner sexual violence (NPSV).

Almost one in three women across the world have experienced one or both of these forms of violence at least once in their lifetime.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) includes psychological, sexual, and physical violence committed by a current or former intimate partner or husband. According to a World Health Organization (WHO) research study published in 2021, more than 1 in 4 women (26%) aged 15 years and older have suffered violence at the hands of their partners at least once since the age of 15. And more recently, an estimated 245 million (or 10% of women ages 15 and above worldwide) have experienced IPV in the last 12 months alone.

Violence causes lifelong damages to women, affecting their physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health. Physical consequences associated with experiencing IPV include acute injuries, chronic pain, gastrointestinal illness, gynecological problems, substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and a two- to three-fold increased risk of depression.

In addition to violence from intimate partners, non-partner sexual violence (NPSV) poses a risk to women's safety and bodily integrity. NPSV refers to acts of sexual violence committed by any person that is not a current or former husband or male intimate partner. NPSV can be perpetrated by a family member, friend, acquaintance, or stranger.

Worldwide, an estimated 6% of women and girls aged 15 to 49 years have been subject to sexual violence from a non-partner at least once since age 15.

Victims of domestic violence can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline 24/7/365 at 1-800-799-7233.

Many people think that anger management is about learning to suppress anger. But never getting angry is not a healthy goal. Anger will come out regardless of how hard someone tries to tamp it down. The true goal of anger management isn't to suppress feelings of anger, but rather to understand the message behind the emotion and express it in a healthy way without losing control.

“Anger is a normal, healthy emotion, neither good nor bad. Like any emotion, it conveys a message, telling you that a situation is upsetting, unjust, or threatening,” Lenhardt says. “If your knee-jerk reaction to anger is to explode, however, that message never has a chance to be conveyed. So, while it's perfectly normal to feel angry when you've been mistreated or wronged, anger becomes a problem when you express it in a way that harms yourself or others.”

Some might think that venting anger is healthy, that the people around them are too sensitive, that their anger is justified, or that they need to show their fury to get respect. But the truth is that anger is much more likely to have a negative impact on the way people see them, impair their judgment, and get in the way of success.

More information on the Women's Family Violence Group and the Anger Management Group can be obtained by calling the OSF Saint Anthony's Psychological Services department at (618) 474-6240. Most insurances are accepted including Medicaid and Medicare. Some eligibility and restrictions may apply.