



THE BRIDGE

Family-centered treatment for mental illness & substance use disorders

Winter 2011

WestBridge values

WestBridge strives to be collaborative, person-centered and recovery-oriented. We have developed the following set of values that we want to be reflective of our relationships with our participants, families, co-workers and colleagues.

- Hope, respect, teamwork and direct communication are the core elements of our culture.
- We want everyone we interact with to experience our compassion, thoughtfulness, integrity and responsiveness.
- Everything we do is driven by a desire to develop authentic relationships.

We encourage you to let us know when we are living up to these values and when we are falling short. By working together, we can make treatment a positive, hopeful experience. ■

WESTBRIDGE

COMMUNITY SERVICES

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Social media and health

We are surrounded with several ways to communicate with one another: cell phones, text messages, email, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and the list goes on. We are even creating new language: brb, lol, ttyl, etc.

We have an immediacy of expression and communication that is beneficial, but may also be overwhelming. Our sense of intimacy is changing. We are telling people things online that we may not say if they were sitting next to us.

While there may be many benefits, we are beginning to see how texting, tweeting and “facebooking” are contributing to crime, victimization,

isolation and mental illness. At WestBridge we are concerned about the effect of social media on an individual’s ability to develop healthy friendships, cope with anxiety and depression, and protect privacy. Many young adults are

sacrificing their privacy when personal information goes online, be it pictures from a party or cyber bullying.

People break off relationships via text and they may have arguments via text without ever having any type of spoken or visual contact. This may lead to dissociation between communication and consequences. The impersonalization causes further isolation and can contribute to feelings of hopelessness, unworthiness and depression.

WestBridge will be surveying local college students and professors to learn more about how social media may be affecting communication, relationships, and overall health and wellness. This information will help us provide treatment to the texting generation. ■



Participant perspective

In my time at WestBridge, I realized that not all questions have answers. I hate to think that I haven't tried my best to look at why I came to treatment, but I only know that it felt like the best thing to do. I wish I could say my life is simpler in sobriety, but it's far more complicated. Yet, I am much better equipped to handle stressful situations after five months in recovery. WestBridge gave me the opportunity to gain these skills and apply them. I have been allowed to reshape myself to some degree through this program.

WestBridge began for me at the inpatient level, where I spent four months in a very structured environment to ensure my safety and sobriety. This broke me down so I could build a life in recovery and be comfortable with myself and others. After three months I knew I was capable of living a productive life and was eager to begin this task. Having so many freedoms taken away allowed me to realize how much I was taking for granted. My transition into outpatient was a dream come true and finally time for me to experience all that I had missed. I now take so much pleasure in the simple things in life, I don't feel the need to use drugs or alcohol. ■



Facebook recently reported that most users who have hundreds of Facebook friends interact with only 5 to 10 percent of them through Facebook communication. If this percentage reflects virtual interaction, face-to-face interaction is probably with far fewer of these friends.

Virtual friendships

Young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 often have hundreds, if not thousands, of "friends" on social media sites like Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn. However, the percentage of these friends that they know well, confide in and have face-to-face interactions with is most likely far fewer.

The question is whether or not we are building relationships with the depth and substance of an enduring friendship or merely making insignificant connections.

Will these superficial connections lead to a new definition of friendship or will they lead to increased feelings of isolation?

The lack of in-person friendships may negatively impact an individual's identity, self-esteem and overall wellness. Although the boom in social media may make it seem like we have more friends than ever, we actually may have fewer true friends. ■



did you know?

Dr. Mark Green, WestBridge medical director and host of "One Hour at a Time," talked with Dr. Hilarie Cash about her new book, "Video Games and Your Kids," and her organization, reSTART. The show aired on October 25, 2010. Log on to voiceamerica.com and search the Health and Wellness Channel on Mondays to listen to past shows or listen live Mondays from 3-4 p.m. EST.

The reSTART program is the first dedicated in-patient facility for video game and Internet addicts in North America. The reSTART: Internet Addiction Recovery Program is specifically oriented towards launching tech-dependent youth and adults back into the real world. The individually tailored program is designed to assist participants with an Internet and/or computer-based behavioral addiction to break the cycle of dependency. ■



College students and social media

The dramatic increase in social media use has begun to change the way college students communicate, develop relationships and interact with each other.

- In 2010, mtvU, The Associated Press and The Jed Foundation interviewed 2,207 undergraduate students. Participants were asked questions regarding their use of social media. Survey results indicate that 90 percent of the students interviewed had visited a social network site in the last week and four in 10 of those students had more than 500 friends on those sites. There have been 45.3 million active users of Facebook in the last 30 days; 45 percent of these users are between the ages of 18 and 25.
- One in seven students reported that social networking sites increased their feelings of isolation. One-third of students surveyed reported being online more than six hours a day.
- Close to 70 percent of students say they have read something posted online by someone close to them that made them think the person was crying out for help.
- Four in 10 students reported that when they are upset they are likely to reach out for help via text message.
- 85 percent of students felt compelled to immediately answer a new message on their phone and nearly 70 percent reported having arguments with peers exclusively over text message. ■



Family perspective

Over many years, we have sought help for our son Grant's* mental illness and drug addiction, and for the chaos this has brought to our family. We have been at the point of despair more than a few times, feeling hopeless, knowing that he was also in pain.

This search took a positive turn when we met with the WestBridge outreach team. Their accepting, understanding and non-threatening approach gave us hope for better communication within our family and for a more productive life for our son. It took several months to establish a foundation of trust that we could build on. We can now look back and see the ways we have benefitted from the many resources available through WestBridge. Grant's stay at The Commons brought us a reassurance of safety, and the development of a pathway toward a healthy, stable life.

Our participation in FES has resulted in greater insight and accomplishments. We are able to set goals within our family and discuss ways to support each other, while recognizing our son's need to become more independent. A significant aspect of WestBridge's help is the willingness of staff to take a call from us at any time, and to help us find solutions to whatever problem has come up.

We have also been helped to see our strengths as individuals and as a family. Our heartfelt thanks to all the staff for helping us learn positive, skilled approaches to the challenges of co-occurring disorders. It is not an easy road to recovery, but we now have hope and real tools for this journey. ■

**not his real name*

in the news

- Over 30 WestBridge participants attended the annual Recovery Dinner on November 8 and were awarded medallions for their lengths of sobriety. Some participants shared their wisdom, strength and hope, and several played their music.
- WestBridge hosted a lunch at Harvard University on December 6. Brittney Cross, OnCOURSE program student services liaison, organized a roundtable discussion on "Social Media Effects on the Mental Health of College Students." Joe Pyle, president of Scattergood Foundation, moderated the discussion.
- WestBridge announced its annual Excellence in Service award winners in December: Norm Asselin, Customer Relations; Kristen Fredrickson, Care Management Team Leader; Drew Welch, Boston Area Team Nurse/Team Leader; and Rob Tatman, Residential counselor. *Congratulations!* ■



meet the doc

Dr. Delia Cimpean

Dr. Delia Cimpean is the newest member of the WestBridge medical team. She is board certified in psychiatry and internal medicine and was educated at the University of Medicine in Bucharest, Romania, University Paris-Sud and Dartmouth Medical School.

Dr. Cimpean is an assistant professor of medicine and psychiatry at Dartmouth, consultant psychiatrist and primary care doctor. She is also involved in research at the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center on integrating medical and psychiatric care. She has experience treating people with serious mental illness, addictions, post-traumatic stress disorder and other anxiety disorders, and is adept in evidence-based psychiatric treatments, delivered in conjunction with preventative and ongoing medical care.

We are very grateful to have Dr. Cimpean join us weekly to consult with our team and spend time with WestBridge participants. Please visit westbridge.org to learn about all the members of our medical team. ■


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wellness

Tips for social media safety

- Use good judgment – Assume anything you put on a social networking site will be seen by third parties, including family, friends and employers. Put logic above emotion.
- Change your passwords – Changing passwords often can help avoid account hacking. Don't use the same password for social networking sites as you do for email and online banking accounts.
- Know your privacy settings – Many sites allow users to control who can access their personal information. Get to know these settings and use them!
- Be consistent – Using the same photo, language and messaging can help reduce chances of identity theft and may generate trustworthiness among employers when conducting background checks.
- Avoid controversial statements – If you think somebody might be offended by language or a comment, don't say it on social media sites. ■

creative corner

We invite our readers to share their artwork, essays, photos and poems.



Comments

We welcome your comments about this issue of *The Bridge* and invite you to submit ideas for future stories.

To contact us and for more information on our services, visit

WESTBRIDGE.ORG

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