Ohana House

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Ohana House, named after the Hawaiian term "family" is an independent living program for young women ages seventeen and half to thirty years old who are struggling with the transition into adulthood, with the required agreement to create a plan in collaboration with their family that incorporates achievable goals and personal values.

Malia Mullahey is the founder and owner of Ohana House and specializes in working with young adults who struggle with substance abuse, trauma, bipolar disorder, depression and anxiety in addition to working with young women as a midwife and working with those who are having a difficult time in transitioning to parenthood.

Live in mentors monitor the progress of the women, assist with conference calls between the women and their families and participate in weekly group sessions with the women, in which respect, honesty and accountability are communicated. Based in downtown Bend, OR, this program is located in two spacious homes, with common living spaces shared and residents are responsible for all chores needed to maintain their home. Residents learn to live in a family environment and face their struggles and successes with support from their housemates.

[This information came from the Ohana House website.]

BOOK REVIEW

"SPARK: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain"

By: John Ratey with Eric Hagerman
ISBN-10: 0316113506

Review by: Beth Black

SPARK: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain hit the book stores and has taken off like wildfire. The storyline is simple, "Exercise is the single most powerful tool to optimize your brain function."

This shouldn't be a surprise to anyone. The "fitness /Mind-Body-Spirit revolution" has extolled the virtues of exercise for the heart and the rest of the body for many years. It stands to reason that, since the brain is part of the body, it would benefit from exercise as well. The surprise is that— in spite of the evidence that has been amassed for well over a decade—no one has "gone mainstream" with news about the transformative effects of exercise on the brain...until Dr. Ratey.

In *SPARK*, Ratey uses laymen's language to weave together science, research, case studies and human interest stories into a fascinating book that proves that regular aerobic exercise has a dramatic effect on the brain. He tells us biologically, chemically, and physiologically the why and the how of these results.

Particularly relevant to those of us in the therapeutic world, Ratey says "I want to cement the idea that exercise has a profound impact on cognitive abilities and mental health. It is simply one of the best treatments we have for most psychiatric problems."

His chapters on Learning, Anxiety, Depression, Attention Deficit and Addiction offer that:

1. Mental health professionals should be prescribing regular exercise for all patients, in addition to, and often in place of medication for anxiety, stress and depression.
2. Aerobic exercise has a positive impact on the entire range of depressive symptoms. It is now the first-line treatment in Britain. Exercise is even more important for prevention of depression than it is for treatment.
3. Focus and attention can be dramatically improved in attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder through on-going aerobic exercise.
4. A daily practice of sustained physical activity can be transformative for those in the early stages of addiction recovery.

The story of a revolutionary fitness program in Naperville, Illinois is compelling. The Zero Hour PE experiment turned 19,000 kids in the District 203 into not only the fittest kids in the nation but also some of the smartest. The goal of the program was to determine if working out before school would give kids a boost in reading ability and other classes—proving that physical activity sparks biological changes that encourage the necessary brain cell connections that make the brain "ready, willing and able" to learn. The program was also dedicated to teaching fitness instead of sports, giving students the skills to maintain health and fitness for a lifetime! The results were astonishing with students outscoring top-tier schools in national tests but also scoring #1 in the world in an international science test.

The evidence is incontrovertible: Aerobic exercise physically remodels our brains for peak performance and has dramatic impact on Learning, Anxiety, Depression, Attention Deficit and Addiction. These findings challenge therapeutic programs to consider some new "best practices":

Treatment Plans: Exercise will become a strategy for treatment plans: The best programs will have a daily exercise curriculum that includes up to 45 minutes of aerobic exercise.

Academics: A health & fitness curriculum will teach skills for a lifetime of wellness and provide a post-program exercise plan.

Program Scheduling: This exercise program will be offered first thing in the morning before the academic program commences to create optimal physical and mental conditions for learning.

Staffing Meetings: Students/clients/patients who arrive with diagnosis of anxiety, depression, ADHD, addiction issues, stress and learning challenges will be carefully monitored once they begin a daily exercise regime. A program of sustained exercise has proven effective in mitigating the symptoms of many mental health conditions.

Medication Management: Medical management will be monitored carefully since exercise has proven to improve the causes of many conditions. Studies have proven that medication may be replaced by exercise in many situations.

Measurement: If possible, programs will participate in longitudinal studies to document and validate the therapeutic effects of exercise.

Staff Call To Action: Staff will "lace up" with the students for aerobic fitness.

I'm sure there are many other BEST PRACTICES opportunities that emerge from this book but my mind won't be its best until I go work out! The book should be on the "must read" list. It will change the way you think about aerobic exercise and the impact exercise can have on programs and healing. And perhaps, it will change your understanding of your own brain and your commitment to fitness.

About the Reviewer: *Beth Black is the Founder/ Executive Director of Cherokee Creek Boy's School in Westminster, SC. For more information, contact Beth at 864-638-8679, imbblack@mac.com, or www.cherokeecreek.net.*