



Clinical Insights

from Dr. Josh Spitalnick



This December newsletter is dedicated to my amazing team and the gratitude I have for their unwavering hardwork, dedication to evidence-based practices, and overwhelming sense of kindness in every interaction.

Henry Ford and the lesser known Edward Everett Hale said it best:
“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.” I guess Ford and Hale knew what I was getting in to before I ever built it.

Almost 8 years ago, I started a solo private practice in Dunwoody, Georgia without any real plans to establish a larger clinic (after running a small anxiety practice for 6 years in Atlanta). I am proud to admit that I have failed miserably at keeping a solo practice. Over these 8 years, I have

hired almost 20 therapists (some licensed and some pre-licensed) along with 2 different administrative personnel. I have always been deliberate on who joins our team, with an emphasis on the following attributes: kindness, humility, and hardworking.

It might scare some practice owners, medical professionals, or even the communities we serve that I don't prioritize what make us 'specialists' as the most important qualifications to be hired. I have worked in enough places to know that if you don't enjoy the people you work with, you won't last, and neither will they. Plus, I have spent the last 15+ years training therapists from all backgrounds, so helping someone improve his/her clinical skills is something I'm always prepared to do.

It's much harder to train human skills like compassion, humor, patience, or a willingness to learn from others. Therefore, for a variety of reasons, I've never worried about hiring the most accomplished, seasoned, or expert professionals (don't get me wrong, many of my team members joined us with those impressive clinical skills already in place). If I'm going to worry at work, it's going to be when my team has a difficult time working together, or when I see a lack of desire to support one another in tough times, or if individuals have egos so big that people are afraid to speak up. I also worry about burnout among my clinicians and my practice manager. I spend extra time attending to the energy of the team, the subtle interactions, the way senior clinicians talk about the junior clinicians and vice versa. However, because of the composition of our team, our amazing leadership, and the quality of each individual as a person, I am very lucky to worry very little about work because we have been able to "*come together, stay together, and work (really well) together.*"

This general philosophy, bringing on great people, has guided my solo practice into a vibrant, wide-reaching outpatient center of excellence that remains a hidden gem in Dunwoody, Georgia. We are one of the largest specialty OCD/Anxiety outpatient clinics in the southeast United States, and I doubt that our local mayor even knows we exist, and I am just fine with that. Those who need to know about us, know about us or find us.

In the first seven years of the practice, I held on to all the formal leadership roles within the clinic. I have been very fortunate to be able to do so with much success because I have an amazing practice manager who has all the personal skills and attributes to succeed in her critical role, making my jobs much easier. No matter what technical or clinical topics are thrown her way, she learns them efficiently, and does a wonderful job supporting a growing team. But I got lucky: she had the personal qualifications to adapt here on day 1 and it's why she has been so successful in her role and for our entire team. Jessica, the whole team is appreciative of everything you do, and how wonderful you are with every new patient or family that reaches out to us.

Over the last 2 years, the significant expansion of our team and our services has made it difficult for me to consistently stay on top of my roles as practice owner, overseer of everything clinical, and lead staff psychologist. It became clear in the beginning of 2021 that our leadership structure would have to change. It did very much this year in the most beautiful ways.

In the summer of 2021, Dr. Theresa Welles, one of our senior staff psychologists and a current clinical supervisor, was promoted to Clinical Director. Then, Dr. Chris Noble, another one of our senior staff psychologists and clinical supervisors, was promoted to Director of Supervision. Although it has only been about 6 months in these new roles, the positive impact they have both had throughout the clinic has been undeniable, not just for the patients and our staff, but also for me personally and professionally. I'm excited to see what changes and innovations they bring to our clinic in 2022 and beyond. Theresa and Chris, I'm grateful for your positivity, kindness, and dedication to making this clinic even better than it already is, and for your lead-by-example mentality.

Our growth, consistency in excellent clinical care, and dedication to best practices has been a labor of love but is largely due to our team staying together and growing together over these 8 years. Individually, they are all smart, hardworking, kind, creative, funny, and generous. But as a team,

they are a successful dream team because of how well they all work together. I am grateful for and proud of each and every one of my clinicians, and I will keep working as hard as I know how to make this the only outpatient clinic you ever want to work in.

There is one more "team" member I have to thank. You will not find her on our website. She sadly doesn't get paid for her role. Yet, I owe her so much. Throughout these 8 years, my ability to grow this outstanding clinic, maneuver tricky business issues, manage all levels of leadership, maintain an active caseload of patients, and still have a semblance of a personal life (and a very happy marriage) is credited almost completely...to my wife.

If you look up class and patience, you will see her. Besides being a great mom, wife, and commercial real estate banker, she is also my unofficial silent business partner (though she would deny this). She is patient with me and she has helped me make difficult business decisions at each stage of the company's growth. She is an amazing businesswoman herself and she will dismiss any credit I am giving her. For anyone married or in a relationship and also trying to run a business, you know it's borderline impossible to 1) do it successfully, 2) stay happy, and 3) remain connected to your family...without someone like her behind the scenes. Cheryl, I'm grateful for your patience and kindness during these 8 years (and the 16 years before that).

So, what did we do in 2021 and where are we headed?

This fall, two of our pediatric specialists both went on maternity leave and this was a major adjustment for our staff and patients. Yet, everyone has worked so well together to manage the personnel changes. Both of these amazing women will be back in 2022. Rachel and Marti, we can't wait to see you and your beautiful growing families very soon!! With their returns, we currently have a staff of 16 clinicians (and a 17th joins us in January).

In 2021, we also added three new early career clinicians. Adam Jaffe, LMSW will be with us for at least the next three years as he works towards his LCSW, and the other two, Dr. Worthington and Dr. Basu, who are both

psychologists, will be with us at least for one year (hopefully many more years after that) as they both complete their Postdoctoral Clinical Fellowships in pursuit of becoming Licensed Psychologists.

In addition to Dr. Welles and Dr. Noble being promoted into critical leadership roles, we also added two new clinical supervisors to our team, both from within the team as well. Thank you Jen Powell, LPC and Dr. Jessica Nasser for taking on these important roles and for providing first class supervision to our pre-licensed staff along with Dr. Welles, Dr. Noble, and myself.

Finally, and most important, is all the clinical care provided by this is wonderful team. What happens when our clinical team “*comes together, stays together, and works together?*”... success.

In 2021, I hope it has been more about quality, and not quantity, but the quantity is staggering. We received over 1,600 unique requests for services through our online patient screener, and though we of course did not provide direct care to every single request, our practice manager and Clinical Director discussed every single request, and followed up by phone or email every single time.

Our team provided direct clinical care to over 1450 unique children, teens, adults, couples, and families in 2021, conducting over 13,000 assessments, intake evaluations, or therapy appointments provided by the best anxiety/OCD clinical team in Atlanta! This includes providing over 20 different **low cost therapy groups and free support groups**, such as: Support and Skills groups for adults battling OCD or Health Anxiety, Adult Social Anxiety Groups, Teen Girl Empowerment Groups, SPACE parenting groups, Support Groups for Mothers of Anxious Children, Parenting Support and Skills Group for Managing Conflict at Home, Divorce/Separation Support Groups, and Support Groups for Adults who support other adults with OCD.

I’m excited to see what new groups we add in 2022 and how we can continue to increase our service offerings that are low cost and no cost to

the community.

As the Practice Owner, a psychologist, a citizen of Dunwoody, Georgia, the father of a child who has battled severe anxiety, AND as a colleague, boss, and supervisor to an amazing team of professionals, I couldn't be more grateful for the clinic that I call home. We recently had the pleasure of celebrating the holidays together and, for me, it was a laid back, food-indulgent, laughter-filled celebration of togetherness and gratitude for each other and our loved ones. Given the last two years of pandemic, it was a night I will cherish for a long time.



Happy Chanukkah, Merry Christmas, and a joyous and healthy New Year to you all!

Face your fears. Live with uncertainty. Take Control of your life.

Dr. Josh Spitalnick, CEO/Practice Owner
Licensed Psychologist
Board Certified in Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology

I can always be reached at drspitalnick@anxietyatl.com if you have any questions, concerns, or positive news to share!

Science Matters

In the section of Science Matters each month, team members share clinical topics that they find relevant to the work that we do, while also emphasizing science and evidence-based practices. Evidence-based practices is core to all of our psychological services. Reinforcing these values, I am proud to highlight many of the trainings and certifications our clinical team has either presented themselves or participated in over the last 12 months to ensure that everyone we serve is being provided the most current, up-to-date, clinical care.

Trainings, Workshops, and Certifications

- Am I Crazy or Just on the Way: Health Anxiety Turned Mental Health Anxiety
- An Integrative Behavioral Approach for the Treatment of Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors (BFRBs)
- Anxiety in School and Student rights, advocating for your anxious child needs, and when to seek out IEP/504 accommodations
- Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID): Perspectives on Phenomenology and Treatment
- Black Lives Matter: An Ethical Call to Action for Clinicians
- Certified Professional Counselor Supervisor (CPCS) certification
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD): An Introductory Online Course
- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) training for PTSD
- Creative Applications of CBT for Anxious Youth
- Ethics and Telemental Health
- Ethics of becoming an OCD Therapist
- Evidence-Based Assessments in Clinic Care
- Experiential Acceptance and Sound Empathy (EASE) for Misophonia: A Psychological Model and Treatment
- Fear and Flexibility: Integrating ACT with ERP to Shape Bravery-Based Behavior Presenter
- Feasting Fasting and Feelings: Oy Vey! A Transdiagnostic Approach to Treating Eating Disorders in the Jewish Community
- Improving Access to Behavioral Healthcare: A Discussion around Technology-Enabled Behavioral Health
- Just Thinking: Helping Clients (and Therapists) Catch and Abandon Subtle Mental Rituals
- Mastering Anxiety and Telehealth in the age of Social Distancing
- OCD Subtypes Creative Treatment Strategies Using Exposure and Response

Prevention (ERP)

- Q & A, information, and resources about the epidemic of anxiety among college students and how to effectively cope with anxiety
- SPACE (Supportive Parenting for Anxious Childhood Emotions) training for Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) and Failure to Launch (FTL) young adults
- SPACE (Supporting Parents of Anxious Children's Emotions) 2-day Intensive Workshop • Supervision: A Mental Health Guide for Professionals
- Supervision: Legal and Ethical Issues
- Training to treat Anxiety and OCD in times of Uncertainty
- Treating Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) in children and adolescents using Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP)
- Treating OCD with ERP: Introduction to Clinical Care
- Treatments for Youth Anxiety

This is only a sampling of the ongoing learning and best practices education from our team in 2021. Well done!!

We See you

In 2021, our team has proudly donated to many non-profit organizations that inspire each of us. Whether it's about OCD, homelessness, cancer, disaster relief, domestic violence, sexual and gender identity, poverty, or woman empowerment, these organizations directly and indirectly impact mental health in the most positive ways. Some of these organizations provide support or direct care, some conduct research, but all provide hope and support with clear missions and values that we believe make the world a kinder place to live.

Many of the organizations below have been highlighted in our newsletter throughout the year in this section, "We See You," and we proudly donate to these and other important organizations. The following non-profits received donations directly from Anxiety Specialists of Atlanta, LLC and/or some of our team members individually. Each organization's name is hyperlinked if you'd like to learn more about them or make a donation yourself.

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#): the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is a voluntary health organization that gives those affected by suicide a nationwide community empowered by research, education and advocacy to take action against this leading cause of death. AFSP is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide.

[American Red Cross](#): The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors. The American Red Cross, through its strong network of volunteers, donors and partners, is always there in times of need.

[Camp Cocker Rescue](#): Camp Cocker Rescue is an animal rescue group with a focus on cocker spaniels in high-kill shelters. Our mission is to take on dogs with health conditions that require vetting and costly medical procedures, get them the proper care and find them loving forever homes.

[CURE Childhood Cancer](#): CURE is dedicated to conquering childhood cancer through funding targeted research while supporting patients and their families.

[Food for the Hungry](#): Food for the Hungry seeks to end ALL forms of human poverty by going to the hard places and walking with the world's most vulnerable people. We serve on the basis of need alone. We strive to respect the culture and customs of the people we serve in order to preserve their humanity and dignity.

[IOCDF](#): The mission of the International OCD Foundation is to help those affected by obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and related disorders to live full and productive lives. Our aim is to increase access to effective treatment through research and training, foster a hopeful and supportive community for those affected by OCD and the professionals who treat them, and fight stigma surrounding mental health issues.

[Jeanette Rankin Foundation](#): Jeannette Rankin Foundation provides unrestricted Scholar Grants to students who identify as women or nonbinary, are 35 and older and demonstrate financial need. Inspired by our namesake, Jeannette Rankin, the first woman elected to the U.S. Congress, the Jeannette Rankin Foundation transforms futures through education.

[NIA](#): The Nia Project's mission is to empower African American women survivors of abuse, experiencing suicidal thoughts to access behavioral health services, find a new sense of purpose, lead more meaningful lives, and affirm their commitment to living a violence-free life. "Nia" is a principle of Kwanzaa, meaning "Purpose."

[Nspire Outreach Inc](#): NSPIRE Outreach's mission is to end homelessness and offer hope for men and women who are in a perpetual state of homelessness,

and quite often, despair. There are two distinct opportunities through which this is accomplished; the NSPIRE Launch (13 weeks) and NSPIRE Life (6 month) programs. Let's explore the aspects of these programs, the reasoning behind those aspects, and most importantly, the effects of the programs on the participants who so desperately need long-lasting change for their lives.

[Memory Research fund, the Alzheimer's Research Center](#)- Regions Hospital Foundation: The Alzheimer's Research Center is a national non-profit research center that relies on charitable gifts to conduct nationally recognized research for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, stroke and other nervous system disorders. The research center has been developing treatments in St. Paul, MN for over 30 years.

[Movember](#): Movember is the leading charity changing the face of men's health on a global scale, focusing on mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer.

[Reins of Hope](#): We are a therapeutic riding program in Atlanta that offers equine assisted therapy to children and adults with special needs, social and emotional challenges, or those in rehabilitation and recovery.

[St Jude Hospital](#): St. Jude is leading the way the world understands, treats and defeats childhood cancer and other life-threatening diseases.

[Susan G Koman Breast Cancer Foundation](#): Our mission is to save lives by meeting the most critical needs in our communities and investing in breakthrough research to prevent and cure breast cancer. Susan G. Komen is the ONLY organization that addresses breast cancer on multiple fronts such as research, community health, global outreach and public policy initiatives in order to make the biggest impact against this disease.

[The Trevor Project](#): The Trevor Project is the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) young people.

Group Therapy & Support Groups

Join our **Adult Social Anxiety Group**, led by Dr. Megan Faye, which begins January 27, 2022. Registration is now open.

This group is for adults (18+) who are seeking group-based treatment and support for social anxiety. This group will be discussing common social anxiety concerns and engage in real world exposure activities outside of the office together.

This group will be offered in person at our Dunwoody, GA offices.



[**CLICK HERE to get full details and Register**](#)

Dr. Cameron Mosley will be offering our next **SPACE (Supporting Parents of Anxious Children's Emotions)** group for parents. The next SPACE group starts Monday January 17, 2022 and will run through Monday February 21, 2022. Each of the 6 sessions will take place over Zoom from 12-1:30pm.



[CLICK HERE to get full details and Register](#)

Join our monthly FREE Support Group for **Adults supporting other Adults with OCD**, whether it's a family member, a loved one, a spouse/partner, or your adult child.



This is not a treatment group, it's a support group. This monthly group will provide a space for support and discussions about the do's and don'ts of supporting a loved one with OCD and/or health anxiety. We will discuss family accommodations, treatment considerations, and self-care in the process.

This group is led by Dr. Josh Spitalnick. It is held the 3rd Monday of every month, from 8-9pm. Each group will allow for up to 20 group members.

****Please note that in December, it will take place December 13,**

2021 (rather than December 20th).**

No registration required, just click below to access access the Event page and the zoom link.

[CLICK HERE to access details and the Zoom link](#)

Join our monthly **FREE Divorce and Separation Support Group**.

This group takes place securely over Zoom.



This support group will provide a community of support and healing to help individuals move through the difficult process of ending and grieving a significant partner relationship. This group will be co-led by two of our Licensed Psychologists, Dr. Theresa Welles and Dr. Chris Noble. It will be held the last Wednesday of every month, from 6-7pm. Each group will allow for 20 group members, no registration required. Just click below to access access the Event page and the zoom link.

****Please note that in December, it will take place December 15, 2021 (rather than December 29th).****

[CLICK HERE to get full details and Register](#)

Check out our [EVENTS](#) section of our website for descriptions, full flyers, and registration details for these and all other upcoming groups and events.



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