

## The Realities of Mental Health in the “New” Normal *The increase in anger and what to do about it*

As the vaccine for Coronavirus continues to rollout, there’s a sense in many people that life will just return to normal. But for others, especially those who deal with various levels of anxiety, stress or panic disorders, this past year has only heightened levels of caution and concern.

Recent surveys designed to measure Americans’ views on employment, housing, finances, education and health (Gallup poll; US Census Bureau data) have consistently shown a worrying trend: Many Americans are feeling intense feelings of frustration, anger and sadness. A third of us are showing signs of clinical anxiety or depression.

The mental health status of Americans is currently worse than it has been in recent history, brought on by four major impacts occurring simultaneously – the pandemic, economic fallout, civil unrest and political conflict.

These issues are creating feelings of uncertainty and anxiety, which often serve as an incubator for anger. Anger transforms those “lost” feelings of helplessness to something that can feel purposeful, targeted and resolvable. Unfortunately anger can often be misplaced and/or misguided.

Anger, when unmanaged, can negatively affect a person’s health through increased blood pressure, stomach ulcerations, chest pains and intestinal damage. It can also lead to aggressive behaviors toward others in the form of domestic violence and crime.

What can we do to curb these feelings within us and in others? Here are some tips to help direct the negative aspects of anger toward something more productive.

### Know the Triggers

We all have things that rub us the wrong way. The trick is to know what they are and prepare with how to react differently than through anger. Anger will often start with physical signs – increased heart rate, a flushing feeling in the face and the tightening of muscles. It’s during this period that you should acknowledge what you are feeling and have one or two distractions or ‘re-routing’ activities to turn to. Count to 10, take a walk, or distract your brain

with plans for an upcoming activity. Once the physical symptoms start to decline, it’s a sign you have overcome an anger outburst.

### Pause and Think

Anger makes us want to react immediately, often impulsively, to a situation. When the anger symptoms start to appear, force your mind into a ‘third-person perspective’. Envision what the situation looks like to another person observing to see that the issue is, what the consequences might be to an act of anger and what other options might be more constructive. If there are other people present, consider what they are seeing. Are there children present? How can you use this moment to teach them how to properly react?

### Let it Go

People who are angry often ruminate over the situation, escalating the facts and the emotions. Letting these feelings go is hard, but one trick is to do something completely opposite of anger – pet a dog or a cat, put on happy, upbeat music, play a silly game with a child, help a neighbor or friend with a chore or project. These activities are more than just distractions, they give you a sense of control, reminding you that there are things you can do to make an impact or positive change in others.

We all have the capacity to feel raw, unbridled anger and learning to control it can be a challenge. But anger is an emotion that does not have to be bad. It can be a very powerful force if it is used in a way that has positive, constructive results.

*If you or someone you know needs help with anxiety or anger management, the professional counselors at LCFS can help. Contact us at 414-536-8333 or 800-291-4513.*

*In person or virtual (tele-health) counseling is available.*



## *A Message from the CEO—Deb Rayburn*

## *Baby Steps With “Re-Entry” Anxiety*



What a year this has been! The COVID-19 pandemic affected people around the world with feelings of stress, fear, confusion and uncertainty. We relied on each other for strength, direction and comfort. Even as we all wondered what the future would hold, the pandemic also awakened feelings of hope, purpose, determination and teamwork within us. At LCFS, it

was a year that brought our mission and purpose into a clear focus, calling upon us to do our part in keeping our community healthy and comforted.

I am so incredibly proud of the professional therapists at LCFS who persisted despite uncertain times and truly provided life affecting and supportive care to so many. During 2020, 4465 mental health sessions helped people through anxiety, depression, trauma or family crisis. Our in-school counselors held 1647 sessions with children struggling with emotional, behavioral or mental health issues and our alcohol and other drug (AODA) counselors worked with over 380 individuals battling addiction. Our adoption team completed 34 adoptions!

As the world begins to heal and reconnect, those in the profession of mental health counseling are preparing for what experts say will be a flood of mental health demands. Accordingly, LCFS has expanded its In School Counseling program to now serve in 16 schools across the Greater Milwaukee area, with a 3-year strategic plan to increase that number annually. We've incorporated virtual counseling to reach more individuals in rural areas, or those uncomfortable with in-person situations. And we will soon be opening an Adoption Office in Dane County to further our reach across Wisconsin to counsel women through pregnancy and match adoptive children into loving families.

The work we do is challenging, but it also incredibly rewarding. The pandemic has taught all of us the importance of teamwork, the fragility of humanity and the power of hope. As we all move forward, at LCFS we will do so with thankfulness and humility. Be hopeful for the future! The lessons we have learned will lead us to better and brighter days!

In His Name,

Deb Rayburn, MS, LPC, CSAC, CSIT

If you are one of the 30% of Wisconsinites who experience anxiety and are feeling concerned about what post-pandemic life will be like, you are not alone.

Mental health professionals have termed this concern “re-entry anxiety” with nearly half of adults, vaccinated or not, anxious about returning to in-person activities. Thankfully there are proven ways to move forward with success.

One of the most effective ways to reduce anxiety is to actually expose yourself to anxious situations, through a series of baby steps. Start by identifying just exactly what it is that you are fearful of, or what is causing your highest level of anxiety. Once identified, start out slowly to familiarize yourself with those concerns.

Begin with just imaging scenarios such as dining out, gathering with friends or traveling. Then little by little incorporate real-life experiences in short, limited exposures. If it's large groups that trigger your anxiety, start with just two or three friends and build up from there. If it's dining out, go to a restaurant you are already familiar with during an off-peak time. If it's travel, start by returning to a place you've been before and have positive and pleasant memories. Slowly build up your confidence at your own pace.

Anxiety will inevitably creep back in and that is okay. Accept that you may probably feel some degree of anxiousness here and there, but that each outing is a stepping stone to the next. Try your best to keep all of the “what if's” under control by focusing on what you can regulate about yourself and your level of comfort. Remember that most anxieties are less about the facts and more about worrying about unlikely things that might go wrong.

Overthinking causes anticipatory anxiety which can snowball quickly. Keep yourself focusing on the present and how well you are taking charge of your own situation. Practice doing the opposite of what your anxiety is telling you to do and in time, the negative feeling will correct itself. You just need to give yourself plenty of patience, a learning curve and forgiveness if you fall back a bit.

These are just a few techniques to tackle anxiety. If you would like to learn more, an LCFS counselor can help you learn skills and techniques to control and master your anxiety, stress or panic.

## We Are Family ~ A Story of Adoption

Amberlea and Donny joined the LCFS Independent Adoption program in 2016. They were eager and excited to add a child to their family.

In early 2019, the couple was informed of a young woman in Michigan who chose them to be parents for her child. On 3/20/2019, their baby girl was born and soon after was able to come home to Wisconsin with her parents. Named after a place of great significance for the couple, Kinzie instantly enthralled everyone with her beautiful brown eyes and head of lush black hair.

It is a given that an adopted child, regardless of race, will be loved unconditionally, but many people do not realize that race plays an important part of the child's life. Donny and Amberlea understood the significance of their new role. Not only were they new parents to a newborn, they were about to navigate life as a transracial family.



The couple began to invest in the culture and heritage their daughter came from. Little things like choosing a skin lotion or hair cream became a learning experience. The family joined a playgroup with racial diversity, began listening to podcasts and news stories of the Black community, and invited more people of varying cultures into their lives to be role models for not only Kinzie, but for themselves as well.

Amberlea and Donny have advocated for their daughter. In a society of tension and racial conflict, they are ensuring their daughter will grow up healthy and confident in who she is, not only as an adopted child, but a child adopted into a transracial family.

The family has been so inspiring, they have been invited to speak at LCFS training events on how to guide adoptive parents through transracial adoption. We are so happy they are part of the LCFS community.

### LCFS ADOPTION PICNIC!

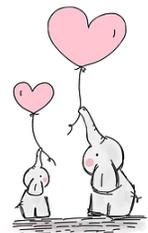
Saturday July 17, 1:00 pm-4:00pm  
Hoyt Park, Picnic site #3  
1800 North Swan Blvd, Wauwatosa, WI 53226

Interested in adoption? Join other LCFS families, from those just starting out, to those whose adoptions have been finalized. It's an opportunity for sharing stories, supporting each other and for having fun!

Email [adoption@lcfswi.org](mailto:adoption@lcfswi.org) for more information and to RSVP.  
Children welcome!

### ***Congratulations to the following families on the completion of their adoptions:***

Garrett and Eileen on the adoption of their daughter Emmelynn 10/30/2020  
Nicholas and Meghan on his adoption of their children Isabella and Michael 11/30/2020  
Kelly and Rachel on his adoption of their children Chayce, Lilly, and Ayden 12/22/2020  
Tom and Mel on the adoption of their daughter Brynnlee, 2/18/2021  
Jonathon and Magnolia on their adoption of their daughter Denise 2/25/2021  
Derrick and Selene on his adoption of their son William 3/19/2021  
Craig and Rachel on his adoption of their daughters Jada and Tamara 5/11/2021  
David and Sarah on his adoption of their daughter Emelia 5/13/2021  
Matthew and Tiffany Johnson on his adoption of their children, Lydia and Anthony 5/27/2021



Contact LCFS at 414-536-8333, FAX—414-536-8348 or EMAIL at [lcfswi.org](mailto:lcfswi.org)

**2nd Annual Strengthening Families;  
Strengthening Lives Fundraising Event**

**LCFS Thrift Stores  
Serving Our Communities**

**October 23, 2021 ~Save the Date!**

LCFS will be holding its second Strengthening Families; Strengthening Lives fundraiser on Saturday evening, October 23, 2021 at Concordia University, in the Luptak Terrace Room. This year marks the agency's 125<sup>th</sup> year!

The family focused event for all ages will feature a silent auction, interactive Bingo, trivia, Family Feud style games and more. Speakers will highlight the work and mission of LCFS.

Proceeds from the event will support the agency's professional mental health counseling for students and adults, counseling and treatment for those battling addiction, and helping families come together through adoption.

Tickets will be available later in the summer. If you are interested in attending, or have a silent auction item you would like to donate, please contact us at 414-536-8333 for more information.

LCFS operates 4 thrift stores which help to support services for adoption, mental health, family counseling and substance abuse. Each store is run by amazing volunteers and support their communities as an outlet for clothing and household items to be reused and repurposed, offering affordable prices and by donating surplus items to local homeless or veteran shelters.

Please consider supporting these essential stores and the mission they support. Also, volunteers are in need at each store for a variety of tasks and services. Hours and additional information can be found at [www.lcfswi.org](http://www.lcfswi.org).

**Second Time Around**

102 West Franklin  
Berlin, WI 54923  
(920) 361-0334

**Yours, Mine & Ours  
Thrift Shop**

1620 South Main Street  
Rice Lake, WI 54868  
(715) 234-1137

**The Economy Center**

7814 West Burleigh Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53222  
(414) 442-2272

**LCFS Thrift Shop**

2324 E. Richmond Street  
Shawano, WI 54166  
(715) 526-9092



**PLEASE USE THESE FUNDS TO FURTHER LCFS'S MISSION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Gift Amount: *(please check)*

\$25  \$50  \$100  \$200  \$500  Other

**I would like to learn more about LCFS's free Planned Giving Services.**

**I would like to receive LCFS's newsletter email**

**ONLINE:** Donations can be made through PayPal at [www.lcfswi.org](http://www.lcfswi.org)

**CREDIT CARD.** Please enter the following information:

Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

CVV (card verification value): \_\_\_\_\_

Card Holder's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**CHECKS** Payable to: LCFS- WI

3800 N. Mayfair Rd. Wauwatosa, WI 53222

**LCFS Contact Information**

**Web Site**—[www.lcfswi.org](http://www.lcfswi.org) ~ Follow us on Facebook!

**Telephone Numbers**

Main Office—414-536-8333

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Toll Free (Northern Wisconsin)—888-867-4840

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