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## Greetings!

Welcome to the CBA Winter Newsletter

# Happy Holidays!



Research-Based **Psychotherapy**  
with Measurable Results



## From the Director's Chair

*Joel Becker, Ph.D.*



As 2014 draws to a close, I would like to wish you all a festive holiday season and best wishes for the New Year. It has been an exciting year here at CBA, and for the CBT community in general. As you can read from the introductions below, we have added 3 new people to our staff. Each comes to us with a good deal of experience, and is ready to assess and treat new clients in their areas of specialty. In particular, we are now able to treat children above 5 years old, and offer a new "Woman's Wellness" program. Please contact me for any other information about our new staff or contact them directly.

In addition, 2014 saw the influence of CBT increase all around the world. I recently attended the Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapists (ABCT) annual convention in Philadelphia. The number of presentations from other countries has grown and is impressive. In the United Kingdom, the National Health Service has established a program of Increasing Access to Psychological Treatments (IAPT), which has CBT as the primary empirically supported treatment that they are teaching, disseminating, and using for treatment. This program, I believe, is a predictor of things to come throughout the country and perhaps the world. Our own Veteran's Administration (VA) has certainly been moving rapidly in this direction. As third-party payers and consumers in general become more aware of the efficacy and relatively less expensive nature of CBT we should see increased utilization and be able to

## About Us

**Cognitive Behavior Associates** is one of the largest clinical practices in the Los Angeles area offering short-term, problem-focused therapy from a cognitive-behavioral perspective.

All of our treatments are based on scientific research, and we continually measure and quantify progress for each client so we know when therapy is working.

Each of our clinicians differs in areas of expertise and interest, and these factors are taken into account when matching a client with a clinician.

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expensive nature of CBT, we should see increased utilization and be able to help more people in need.

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## New Staff Members

*Denica Gordon-Mandel, M.S.W., Psychological Assistant*



Women in their lifetime have a higher rate of both physiological and mental health issues. A graduate of USC's Social Work program, Denica Gordon-Mandel's clinical work focuses on Women's Wellness -- providing interventions that increase behavioral health and feelings of personal effectiveness (e.g., achieving life balance).

The phenomena of "achieving life balance" has gained momentum since the 1980s. Today, with the multiple roles women take on, achieving life balance can be a challenge. It is important to recognize that the concept of "life balance" is a personal one. Whatever life balance means to you, the idea is to have enough time and energy to include both responsibilities and personal interests into your schedule, while feeling in control of your time. Research has illustrated that when we don't feel in control of our time, we are more likely to become stressed and prone to illnesses such as high blood pressure, headaches, insomnia and depression. Also, when the focus on one area of life is at the expense of another we can begin to feel regret, frustration and guilt. This can have a negative impact on both self-esteem and relationships with others.

CBT is a short-term therapy that can help a woman to identify and prioritize the multiple roles and commitments in her life. CBT then teaches strategies that allow you to manage these roles/responsibilities, while also finding time to incorporate activities that are both personally rewarding and rejuvenating. Life will always offer challenges, the goal of CBT is assist women in developing the skills necessary to better manage these challenges, and feel more effective in everyday life. Building this type of resiliency has an impact on overall well-being.

*Karen Muñoz, Ph.D., Psychological Assistant*

## Our Staff

Joel Becker, Ph.D.

Founder and Clinical Director of CBA & CBTI,  
Clinical Professor, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA

Jayson Mystkowski, Ph.D.

Associate Clinical Director, CBA,  
Assistant Clinical Professor,  
Dept. of Psychology, UCLA

Pamela Elfenbaum, Ph.D.,  
M.P.H.

Clinical Psychologist

Melissa Magaro, Ph.D.

Clinical Psychologist

Nancy Robbins, Ph.D.

Director, Pain Management and  
Eating Disorders Programs

Denica Gordon-Mandel,  
M.S.W.

Psychological Assistant

Karen Muñoz, Ph.D.

Psychological Assistant

Lauren Shapiro, Ph.D.

Psychological Assistant

Jamie Powers, B.A.

Administrative Assistant

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Dr. Karen Muñoz received her Ph.D. in Clinical and Developmental Psychology with a certificate in Cognitive Neuroscience from the University of Pittsburgh. She completed her internship at New York Presbyterian Hospital/Weill-Cornell Medical Center and a postdoctoral fellowship at the American Institute for Cognitive Therapy in New York. She has received training in cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), psychodynamic therapy, dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), compassion-focused therapy (CFT), interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT), Relationship Enhancement (RE) therapy for couples, and mindfulness-based therapies. In addition to providing CBT to children, adolescents, and adults with anxiety and depression, Dr. Muñoz offers the following specialized programs for clients:

**Relationship Enhancement (RE) therapy for couples:** RE therapy is an empirically-supported skills-based therapy to help couples improve their communication, increase empathy, and improve their ability to negotiate through problems by increasing openness and minimizing defensiveness. Through the course of treatment, couples will learn and practice the 10 core skills with the goal of altering maladaptive patterns in the couple's dynamic and ultimately leading to a deeper transformation of the relationship.

**Cognitive-behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I):** CBT-I has been demonstrated to be more effective than medication in the long term following treatment for insomnia. During this program, clients will receive a prescribed behavioral plan to reset their sleep schedule and will learn cognitive-behavioral techniques to manage their negative thoughts and anxiety surrounding insomnia.

*Lauren Shapiro, Ph.D., Psychological Assistant*



Dr. Lauren Shapiro earned her Ph.D. in clinical psychology from USC in 2014 and her B.A. in Psychology and French from Northwestern University in 2004. At USC, Dr. Shapiro worked with Dr. Gayla Margolin, studying family interaction, family aggression, and youth development. During her graduate career, she was awarded a predoctoral grant by the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH) to support her research studying physiological stress in adolescents. Specifically, this research examined how adolescents' daily experiences of conflict and risk relate to day-to-day stress hormone levels. Currently, Dr. Shapiro is a post-doctoral scholar at UCLA within the Nathanson Family Resilience center. She is working on two intervention studies, one for

Family Resilience center. She is working on two intervention studies, one for military families who have young children and another for adults transitioning to parenthood. Throughout her clinical and research training, she developed a strong interest in working with adolescents experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety.

While in graduate school, Dr. Shapiro received thorough clinical training in assessment and evidence-based treatments, including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and family therapy. She completed an APA-accredited internship at Pacific Clinics, where she worked with children, adolescents, and adults. She has had extensive experience working with individuals, couples, and families to address a wide range of concerns, including depression, anxiety, family conflict, and parenting challenges.