

At PERSONAL GROWTH ASSOCIATES, we have followed a model of integrated health care. We are considered a multi-specialty group, and our clinicians include Psychologists conducting therapy and psychological testing; Psychiatrists and Advanced Nurse Practitioners, conducting medication management; and Social Workers and LCPCs, conducting therapy.

One of the most important features of our treatment model is the value we place on communication. We often have patients who are receiving multiple modalities of treatment at the same time. For example, patients can be receiving individual therapy, couples therapy, and medication management at the same time. Another potential combination would be an adolescent in individual therapy, family therapy, and receiving psychological testing. These are just a couple of examples of how we integrate care internally within PGA.

Clearly, confidentiality is important and the cornerstone of treatment for mental health issues, but through the years, we have found that it's a terrific advantage that we can walk down the hall and discuss (with written permission) our important patient needs rapidly and conveniently with another member of the treatment team. Our patient's feedback and comfort regarding this process has been positive. They tend to like the ease of communication and "one-stop shopping" at Personal Growth Associates.

We also believe that it is vital for clinicians at Personal Growth to communicate when appropriate with your primary care physician. There are many health care issues that are directly related to stress and are aided by positive mental health habits. Physicians often manage asthma, diabetes, irritable bowel syndrome, obesity, substance abuse, and smoking cessation; all which can be affected by a person's emotional state. Often Physicians are the first line screeners of mental health issues, and many people visit their physician to deal physical issues associated with Generalized Anxiety, Depression, and panic attacks.

Health care has undergone a significant shift in the delivery of mental health services in the last decade. Primary care physicians statistically manage the care

of a higher percentage of individuals with depression and anxiety disorders (38%), surpassing psychiatrists (34%) and therapists (28%). These numbers have changed dramatically due to a variety of factors. One main reason is due to the impact of pharmaceutical companies and the direct marketing and education to physicians promoting the use of their drugs.

Often times, psychologists and physicians are awkward in their communication of mental health issues, physicians often are too busy, and therapists seemed overly guarded about the patient's privacy. In addition, patients are often ashamed of admitting emotional issues, with "old fashioned" social stigmas about psychological treatment creating resistance to openness about emotional disorders. More recent literature is suggesting that patients be aware of advantages of psychologist-physician-patient communication, and how patients benefit from more shared information and team collaboration. We hope to change the stigma based trends, and have the patient be the third partner in the communication triad of therapist-physician-patient. Patient permission, awareness, and assertiveness about their health care needs are incredibly beneficial to the achieving maximum emotional/physical health.

In summary, at Personal Growth, our treatment philosophy is to encourage seamless communication (when appropriate) about our patient's care whether between clinicians "in-house", or with outside primary care physicians. Often times, therapists have the advantage of the therapeutic hour to assist with processing the multiple needs of patients, and can give attention to potential issues such as medical complications, medication compliance and resistance, developing stress management and relaxation training in addition to medical interventions, and creating a safe environment to encourage patients to pursue a positive combination of emotional and physical health. Physicians often seem busy, but welcome information about their shared patient, knowing that therapists often have knowledge that because of the benefits of the therapy hour. Please encourage your clinicians to talk!

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