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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.



I would like to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you a Happy Holiday Season, and a Happy 2016! We have appreciated all the support we have received from our community of academics, clinicians, researchers, and clients. It has been a very exciting year at CBA with lots of growth and enthusiasm for our new staff and programs.

Our associate director, Dr. Jayson Mystkowski, has seen his "Going Well"

### 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.

To learn more, [click here](#) to visit our website!

Our associate director, Dr. Jayson Mystkowski, has been the only program for Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) become the only program in LA to offer specialized, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) services for this difficult problem. Our Staff Psychologists Dr. Pamela Elfenbaum and Dr. Melissa Magaro, have both expanded their hours at CBA, and are available in their areas of expertise. We are also saying goodbye to another of our staff psychologists, Dr. Nancy Robbins, as she transitions into her retirement.

Two of our psychological assistants, Dr. Karen Munoz and Dr. Lauren Shapiro, have both passed their national licensing exams, and will be licensed in the State of California in the next few months. Dr. Munoz has recently taken over the directorship of "Soundly Sleeping," our CBT-I program for insomnia. Denica Gordon-Mandel, our social work clinician, has developed and is now offering her new program focusing on "Woman's Wellness" issues (see article below).

Our Cognitive Behavior Therapy Institute (CBTI) has received a five-year approval from the American Psychological Association (APA) to offer Continuing Education (CE) credits to psychologists and other licensed clinicians. We anticipate some exciting webinars coming in the next year (stay tuned!).

It has been a year where "Mindfulness-Based" and "Compassion-Focused" CBT approaches have garnered more empirical support. Recently, an entire issue of the American Psychologist was devoted to Mindfulness as a concept supported by science. All of the clinicians at CBA are prepared to deliver the most current and empirically supported treatments. These treatments all stand on the long history of other CBT interventions that are now considered "traditional" and form the bases for our methods to help our clients.

## Women's Wellness Program

*Denica Gordon-Mandel, M.A., M.S.W.*



We here at Cognitive Behavior Associates recognize that women often take on much of the responsibility to manage family traditions and set the expectations for the holiday season. It's a time we visit parents, grandparents, and have sons and daughters home for a visit. We attend parties, buy gifts, and make New Year resolutions. However, with all the joy surrounding the holiday season there also can be a lot of extra stress, frustration, overeating, insomnia, and interpersonal conflict. Add to this life transitions such as childbirth, recent loss, trauma, financial pressures, physical ailments, or divorce, and surviving the holiday season becomes crucial. CBA developed the Women's Wellness Program to help improve coping skills that can help reduce holiday stress. Our goal is to work with our female clients to apply cognitive and behavioral techniques that help manage the holiday blues and welcome in 2016!

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## Our Staff

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### 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

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It's an exciting time in the study of gut bacteria on ones mental health. An article in the American Psychological Association's "Monitor" summarized interesting and exciting research regarding the brain-gut connection.

Specifically, evidence suggests a two-way relationship between gut bacteria and ones anxiety or mood. Healthy levels of gut bacteria in ones gut is associated with less anxiety and enhanced mood. And, enhancing ones psychological well-being (i.e., receiving cognitive-behavioral therapy), promotes the presence of healthy gut bacteria, which help to produce essential neurotransmitters for emotional regulation (e.g. serotonin) (Carpenter, S. (2012). *That Gut Feeling*. *Monitor*, 43, 50-55). Recently, findings were presented in which a probiotic strain of *Bifidobacterium longum* was tested in a small group of healthy men, based on studies previously conducted in mice. Men receiving this particular "psychobiotic" had reduced physiologic and psychological stress, and a modest improvement in memory (Society for Neuroscience (SfN) 2015 Annual Meeting. Abstract 162.04. Presented October 18, 2015).

Altogether, these results argue strongly in favor of additional investigation of how we can use "psychobiotics" to help people cope with the variety of stressors encountered in ones life, and to potentially develop other "psychobiotics" for patients suffering from stress-related disorders, such as mood and anxiety disorders.