

Dear Prospective Client,

I have dedicated my life and passion for the past 18 years to providing individuals, couples, families, and the broader community with mental health-related support services. I have worked in the capacity of program manager, licensed clinician, and facilitator/educator addressing health and well-being issues from a holistic (mind-body-spirit) perspective within a context of systems thinking. The current services I offer focus on the patient, caregiver, and loved ones struggling with health and healing-related issues as well as navigating the healthcare system.

Many universal challenges arise during a health-related crisis, especially when dealing with chronic illness, debility and decline, and death. My skills help meet the primary need to maintain well-being in the face of stress dealing with limitations and change, especially when dealing with loss of assumptions, expectations, and dreams. It can certainly be helpful during such periods to keep things in context and to establish connection with others going through similar experiences. However, it is often difficult to do either effectively during intense, life-altering events.

In general, I believe many obstacles to achieving and maintaining a sense of well-being stem from an unhealthy self-concept, unresolved and or unacknowledged loss, lack of a sense of meaning, lack of connection, and poor coping skills. Consequently, a significant portion of my career as a facilitator, counselor, and educator has revolved around supporting others deal with symbolic loss (not simply death-related loss), find meaning, and connect to "something more," all in service of developing and maintaining a stable use of self.

I regularly apply nurturing and empowering interventions within the context of a humanistic/existential therapeutic relationship. Biopsychosocial and spiritual facets of the client are examined, which also include family of origin, socio-economic, religious, and cultural influences. Agencies from which I have acquired experience include both not-for-profit and nonprofit organizations, adult education centers, and independent physician associations.

I believe a primary goal of education and counselling should be to help individuals to uncover their own strengths related to psychological well-being. Often a lack of meaning, unprocessed loss, and suppressed guilt and shame inhibit healing. This is a major reason I tend to promote greater holistic self-awareness. Greater self-awareness and understanding allows for, but unfortunately does not guarantee, the possibility of greater tolerance, acceptance, and forgiveness.

The human experience is by nature conflictual and contradictory at times. Forgiveness and acceptance may be cultivated through greater understanding of the dynamics that motivate our innate tendencies. Sometimes a relatively neutral observer, such as a counselor, can mirror forgiveness and acceptance. I believe guidance and therapeutic counselling including mind/body healing modalities can facilitate a shift in perspective and perception, which in turn can lead one to make healthier lifestyle choices leading to greater well-being.

I feel strongly that many of the principal health issues confronted both at the individual and community levels must be addressed with greater emphasis on education, especially in terms of increasing self-awareness, process support, and a systems perspective. I also believe that client-centered counseling, in which the client assists in the design of treatment interventions unique to their personal characteristics and circumstances, is crucial to achieve successful outcomes.

Sincerely,

Michael Stephens, LMFT

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MICHAEL STEPHENS

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OBJECTIVE To facilitate well-being, in particular, for those challenged by chronic and life limiting illness, caregiving responsibilities, death & dying, and living with major loss. Additionally, to offer wellness guidance and educational services at an individual and community level.

Summary of Expertise

- 18 years as an experienced facilitator, educator, and counselor working with individuals, couples, families, and groups struggling with life limiting related and/or death & dying issues as well as mental health related issues and relationship challenges associated with trauma and stress.
- 12 years continuing education online and onsite instructor presenting to licensed professionals on topics related to mental health, working with the chronically ill, and death & dying.
- 10 years psycho-educational community based presentations with an emphasis on facilitating wellness practices that lead to sustainable healthy lifestyle habits enhancing quality of life.
- 3 years working with individuals diagnosed with serious mental illness (SMI) in psychiatric and post-acute care facilities.

Professional Work Experience

LMFT Counselor, Facilitator & Educator

- 2005 – Present - Private Practice/Contractor – Various Locations, CA

CE Provider & Former Adjunct Faculty, JFK University

- 2006 – Present - JFK University, Pleasant Hill

Population Health Program Manager (Contractor)

- 5/2015 – 11/2016 - Brown and Toland Medical Group – Oakland, CA

Program Coordinator & Administrator – Grief, Loss & Bereavement

- 12/2012 – 2/2015 - Sutter Care At Home Hospice – Roseville, CA

Program Director-Manager Social Services

- 7/2008 – 3/2011 - Hope Hospice – Dublin, CA

Assistant Bereavement Coordinator

- 2/2002 – 2/2005 - Kaiser Permanente Hospice Department - NEB

Education

MPH, Health Policy & Management Emphasis

University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA

MA Counseling Psychology Holistic Emphasis

John F. Kennedy University, Pleasant Hill, CA

Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LMFT: Licensed Marriage Family Therapist LMFT #42307 (Sept. 2005) - Board of Behavioral Sciences Approved PCE #4180 (past) (March 2009) - MFT and MSW internship supervision qualified (MSW Feb. 2008; March 2013)
Post Licensed Contract Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eden Medical Center – Cancer Support Group Facilitation 8/08-11/10) - Alta Bates Comprehensive Support Center – Proctor/ facilitator MC (9/06-5/08) - San Ramon Regional Medical Center – Cancer Support (02/05-09/08) - Brown & Toland Medical Group – (-5/15-12/17)
Guest Lecturer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UC Berkeley Extension - California State University Sacramento - Samuel Merritt College - American River College - JFKU Graduate Practicum Holistic and Grad Psychology counselling centers
Internship Sites (Unpaid/Volunteer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kaiser Permanente Hospice Vallejo, Martinez, Walnut Creek - The Wellness Community, Walnut Creek - Hospice of the East Bay (formerly Hospice & Palliative Care of Contra Costa)
Cultural Immersion & Volunteer Work	Hospital EsSalud, Cusco Peru, Cancer Treatment Dept. & General Patient Orientation
Publications; Written Materials; Developed Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bereavement Group Facilitation manual - MFTI and MSWI training materials - Cultural Sensitivity Awareness and health outcome gaps review - Executive Summary & End-of-Life Program business proposal - JFKU Online/Onsite Caregiving, EOL, and Psycho Educational Courses
Examples of Workshops / Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designed and facilitated more than 3 dozen workshops and presentations on caregiving, working with chronically ill, Death & Dying, and Grief & Loss - Co-presenter National ADEC (Association for Death Education Counseling) conference in Albuquerque New Mexico - Key presenter Kaiser Hospice Staff Retreat at Christian Brothers Center - Co-presenter/facilitator UC Berkeley Business Engineering, Information, & Technology staff retreat - Continuing Education workshop provider under auspices JFK University Graduate Psychology Department - Developed multiple online Continuing Education courses for JFK University - Collaboration with award winning film producers on caregiving and Grief & Loss presentations 1. http://www.shininglightproductions.net/about.html - Nancee Sobonya 2. http://www.secretsoflifeanddeath.com/film-reviews-2 - Dr. Michelle Peticolas
References	Personal and Professional references available upon request.