



ROBERT C. AVALTRONI, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
BUREAU OF AIR, NOISE, & HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

59-17 Junction Blvd., 11th floor
Corona, New York 11368-5107
(718) 595-4418
FAX (718) 595-4544

3/5/02

Jessica,

I didn't know if you or Tom
had the opportunity to read today's
Wall St Journal article.

It gives us the opportunity to
relate how the psychological impacts
have a definitive impact on the people.

Its an obvious reason to point to
for funding assistance of non-physical
health related issues.

Regards.


3/5

Wall Street
Journal
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Bracing for Trauma's Second Wave

*Depression, Irritability, Angst
Return to New York City
Six Months After Sept. 11*

By LUCETTE LAIGNADO
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

NEARLY SIX MONTHS after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, psychologists say a second wave of emotional trauma is hitting New Yorkers, and it may be tougher to treat than the first.

In the weeks immediately after the World Trade Center collapse, psychologists were deluged with requests for counseling from survivors, rescue workers and victims' relatives, as well as people who had mainly watched the tragedy on television. In November and December, there was a lull. But in recent few weeks, calls to employee-assistance programs and private counselors in the city have started up again.

The strain of months of living with searing memories, frequent terrorist alerts and fears about what the future will bring is taking a toll. "People have said to me, 'we are shouting at each other and we are not even angry,'" says Henry Spitz, who heads the couples therapy program at Columbia University's medical school. "There is a background tension that is there all the time," he says. The level of irritability is so high, it's "like chalk on a blackboard."

"Our reserves were used up by 9/11," adds Ellen McGrath, a psychotherapist with a private practice in Brooklyn. She says the period of greatest danger after a traumatic incident is from the six-month anniversary to the one-year mark and beyond. "This is the season when it starts," says Dr. McGrath, who fears an upsurge in rages, self-destructive behavior and even suicides. "The despair, the helplessness get so intense. ... It bursts out."

Already more employees say they are feeling depressed or anxious or having trouble sleeping, says Irene Lovitz, who heads the employee-assistance program at Merrill Lynch & Co., whose corporate headquarters are next to ground zero.

ComPsych Corp. of Chicago, which provides employee assistance and counseling to more than a million patients in the New York area, says a number of the companies it worked with in the fall have asked it to come back. One call for help came from a human-resources official at a major client on behalf of herself, not the company's employees. The wife of a Sept. 11 victim from her company had committed suicide, and she was feeling profoundly shaken.

ComPsych's chief executive, Richard Chalfetz, says the heightened sense of malaise isn't limited to New Yorkers. Residents of other large cities worry that they could be next, he says. People who work in tall, high-profile buildings—like Chicago's Sears Tower, where some of his company's clients have offices—feel particularly vulnerable, he says.

Even among New Yorkers, the reaction isn't uniform. Rescue workers and people in areas close to ground zero or in parts of the city, like Chinatown, where the economic repercussions are most intense, are having the most trouble coping. Elsewhere, there is a semblance of normalcy and people seem more eager to blot out the past and move on.

Randall Marshall, an associate professor of clinical psychiatry at Columbia University's medical school, says it is classic to see an unraveling occur now, several months after a disaster. "After the honeymoon phase, where you pull together, you enter the fragmentation phase where you rip apart," Dr. Marshall says. People move into "that survivalist mindset—I have to take care of me and mine." The challenge for psychiatrists, he says, is how to help people live in a world that is constantly under threat.

In mid-September, Emily Stein, a Manhattan psychologist, was convinced that couples—including her own patients—seemed to be growing closer, strangers were behaving more kindly since the disaster, and there was

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Peter Horvath

FDNY Tries to Rescue Its Own

By LUCETTE LAIGNADO

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The New York City Fire Department is in the throes of a second major rescue and recovery effort. But this time, instead of searching through the rubble of the World Trade Center, it is trying to find and treat emotionally troubled firefighters.

Leading the effort is the department's counseling service unit, which has offices

ant culture, have started taking antidepressants and sleeping pills. And growing numbers—\$85 in January, a 50% increase from the month before—are seeking psychological help at the counseling unit.

Irritability is a widespread symptom. Lethargy and an inability to focus are also common. Most worrisome, says Malachy Corrigan, the unit's director, are the intrusive images that haunt some firefighters. He cites one who found that when he was at home playing with his child on his day off, all he could think of were the body parts he had collected during the week at ground zero.

This is also a world where "closure" is a dirty word and there seems to be resentment of the outside world for moving on. The notion of "returning back to normal is almost an insult," says Ralph Esposito, a peer counselor with the unit, who journeys each day from one firehouse to another to plead with his fellow firefighters to seek help.

Michael O'Keefe, a battalion chief who came on board to help Mr. Corrigan administer the growing unit, thinks he knows why more firefighters are coming forward now: "We are a group of people who are told to do a job, and we do it," says the chief, one of only 50 battalion heads in a force of 16,000. "In the days and weeks following, all we had were tasks. We worked 24 hours. Then we attended funerals—there were days of 10-12 funerals. Then the new year arrived, and with it came a

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*Therapists have to shed
traditional approaches
to break into the closed
Fire Department culture.*

above Ladder Co. 20 in Manhattan's SoHo. But forget couches, credentials and the classical shrink-patient relationship. Here, therapists sit side by side with the people they are treating, joking, chatting and even cooking and eating together.

As the six-month anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks approaches, psychological problems appear to be mushrooming in the Fire Department. More firefighters—102 as of Saturday, 120 two weeks ago—are out on stress leave now than in December. Some firefighters, breaking with their macho, self-reli-

Six Months After Sept. 11, Bracing for Second Wave

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a sense that small problems and everyday annoyances had lost their relevance.

Now she says she was wrong about the impact of the tragedy. In recent weeks, her patient load has ballooned, and so has the intensity of the emotional problems she is handling. "I have been seeing so many unhappy people," she says. "It is not that they lost husbands or children. It is a subtle gnawing black cloud, which is hard to treat."

Constant warnings about other attacks are also taking a toll, Dr. Marshall says. "In war, it is sort of clear who the enemy is, but with terrorism, any situation that used to be benign can become dangerous. You can't clearly identify a place of safety versus a place of high risk."

But while it was acceptable—even desirable, in a way—to confess to feelings of stress a few months ago, now revealing anxiety may be risky. "You see a less sympathetic environment. It is not so OK to fray," says Lloyd Sederer, director of clinical services at the American Psychiatric Association.

"It is the economy and the culture saying, 'What is the matter with you? This happened in September.'"

He worries that many companies, already trying to cut costs and reduce staff because of the recession, won't be very supportive. "There is an expectation that you get on with life," he says. Forced to pick and choose whom to keep and whom to let go, he is afraid that some companies may be tempted to take a Darwinian approach, targeting those least able to cope.

Even people who counsel other people have been affected. At the Institute for Community Living, a nonprofit near ground zero that offers mental health and social services around New York, the chief executive, clinical psychologist Peter Campanelli, says he is finding that some of his employees are "having difficulties sleeping, having bad dreams about people falling out the window." One worker, he says, "sits at home sometimes and breaks out crying." And a manager has been "a lot more irritable. We have gotten complaints from her staff that she is short-tempered."

MHN, a behavioral health concern based in San Rafael, Calif., ended its work with the Internal Revenue Service recently. The IRS's New York offices, which include hundreds of employees near ground zero, went so far as to have four full-time MHN counselors on site since shortly after Sept. 11. But psychiatrist Derek Suite now worries that some IRS employees may be left in the lurch. "Many employers want people to move on, get on with it, and I understand that," says Dr. Suite. "But for many people it is not over. For many people the grieving is still taking place."

They seem to know that at Marsh & McLennan Cos., a global professional services company that lost 295 employees in the attacks, Barbara Perimutter, the senior vice president in charge of public affairs, says the company still has a full-time psychologist on site, and Marsh employees can get unlimited counseling for at least a year. With so many colleagues gone, even she finds herself reliving the tragedy frequently. "You want to call someone and you realize that person isn't there," she says. "It's going to take a long time."