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ANXIETY SPECIALISTS  
— of ATLANTA —  
Evidence-based Psychological Services

# 2022 Year in Review Newsletter



Out with old (2022), in with the new (2023). But first, let's appreciate the scope of our team's impact locally, regionally, and nationally.

As we saw in 2021, the need for mental health services continued to rise in 2022. The need for evidence-based anxiety services continued to



outpace the providers that were available nationwide (probably worldwide), as cited in numerous professional reports this year. In 2022, Anxiety Specialists of Atlanta had almost 1,800 new families or adults complete the online patient screener in search of effective care with our team or, on average, 150 new requests for services each month. Though not everyone who sought treatment was seen by our team, we never wavered in providing free consultation calls, providing credible referrals where possible, and remaining available to answer questions about our services.

Managing new requests for services is a ton of unnoticed work, it's time sensitive, and I'm always impressed by how efficient our team is with this process. Much thanks goes to our Practice Manager, Jessica Kalin, and our Clinical Director, Dr. Theresa Welles, for making sure this first interaction sets a positive tone for all future interactions. Behind closed doors, the numbers are staggering. Our team of 21 anxiety/OCD specialists, covering 32 different states, held over 15,000 intake and therapy appointments in 2022. I could have never imagined the scope of our reach when I launched this clinic as a solo practice almost 10 years ago. We will be ready to meet or exceed this in 2023, no doubt. Great job team!

In 2022, we heard from national public policy and healthcare organizations, including the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), recommending for the first time that primary care doctors screen all children ages 8 to 18 for anxiety, new guidance that highlights the ongoing mental health crisis among American youth. The demand for effective anxiety/OCD pediatric services remains at an all-time high.

I am so proud of our team and how they have responded to the demand for youth services. Our team represents one of the largest pediatric and adolescent outpatient centers in the U.S. We continue to add new groups, workshops, and services for youth and their parents regularly given that early intervention is critical and effective. Of note, the USPSTF also recommended that all adults under the age of 65 be screened for anxiety. Not surprising since globally, COVID prompted a 25% increase in anxiety



and depression. Basically, 2022 could have been named “the year of anxiety awareness advocacy” and our team is on the frontlines leading the charge.

As we head into our 10th year as a practice, I’m simply overwhelmed with gratitude and appreciation for what our clinic has evolved into. We have an outstanding leadership and supervisory team. Our customer service is exceptional. Our clinical staff is one-of-a kind, not only in the therapy room (where I think they are rock stars!), but around the office with just the right amount of goofing off, silliness, camaraderie, and laughter. We are always there to support one another in tough times (and we had some doozies this year) and everyone takes time out of their busy week to celebrate birthdays, beautiful family moments, and cheer each other on when there are successes (and we had many of those this year as well). I know we have made mistakes this year, we will learn from these mistakes. I know we can always do better, and we will keep trying to improve. I can’t ask for much more as an owner of a business, especially one that has a primary focus of helping others who are struggling.

We have grown to 23 anxiety specialists and support staff in 2022 and the people on our team are **undeniably** the special sauce that makes it all worthwhile. Each individual person on the team deserves the recognition for being outstanding, kind humans who work hard and who give so much of themselves to the families they serve each day. I am reminded each day that the colleagues we spend our long work days with have a major impact on our mood, our energy levels, our self-esteem, our professional goals, our overall sense of purpose, and our desire to get up and do it all over again the next day. The team I am surrounded by lifts me up, keeps me accountable, and pushes me to be better each day.

Our staff is aware of the privilege we have to be a part of someone’s recovery experience, and this is never taken for granted. Thanks to each of you and your families for trusting Anxiety Specialists of Atlanta to be a part of your healthcare team and thanks to my team for simply being great at what you do each day. I can’t ask for much more.



*Wishing you and yours a healthy and prosperous 2023!!*

**Dr. Josh Spitalnick, CEO/Practice Owner**  
**Licensed Psychologist**  
**Board Certified in Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology**

Email me at [drspitalnick@anxietyatl.com](mailto:drspitalnick@anxietyatl.com) if you have any questions, concerns, or positive news to share!

**GO DAWGS!!! 2022 National Football College  
Champions**

## 2022 Highlights

There were many positive events to share from 2022, which is another testament to our team. In response to the demand for ***effective, affordable, and accessible care***, here are some highlights of impactful education, advocacy, and treatment resources our team was a part of, along with updates on our clinical team.

## Team Updates

**Dr. Devika Basu** completed Postdoctoral Fellowship and obtained Licensure as a Psychologist in the Fall of 2022. We are excited to announce that Dr. Basu is starting her career as a Licensed Psychologist with Anxiety Specialists of Atlanta!



We added 2 pre-licensed clinicians, **Dr. Tauralee Tenn**, Clinical Psychology Fellow, and **Jessie Jensen, APC** (who is also our Social Media manager), in 2022, continuing our tradition of





training the next generation of anxiety specialists.

We added an early career Licensed Psychologist, **Dr. Gilly Kahn**. Dr. Kahn has successfully spent the last year immersing herself into training and consultations with our team to become an amazing anxiety and OCD specialist, in a short amount of time.



Finally, we were so fortunate to add 3 amazing seasoned clinicians, each bringing unique expertise and leadership to the team. All three have had an immediate impact on the training and mentorship of our other therapists, and all three will serve in more formal supervisory roles in the near future.



**Dr. Haley Byers** is one of only 2 Psychologists in Georgia with the impressive designation of being a Diplomate Board Certified in Behavioral Sleep Medicine. **Dr. Shanee Toledano** has served as Clinical Director of Rogers Behavioral Health in Atlanta and the lead OCD/Anxiety Track Psychologist at Skyland Trail Adolescent Program. Finally, **Michael Stier, LCPC/LPC** is a nationally recognized OCD and health anxiety specialist who exclusively provides telehealth-based services. Michael successfully ran his own solo



practice for the last 4 years prior to joining us. Michael expands our reach serving as our 2nd second therapist operating outside of Georgia (he resides in Illinois).

## Social Media

In the Fall of 2022, we launched an empowering and compassion-

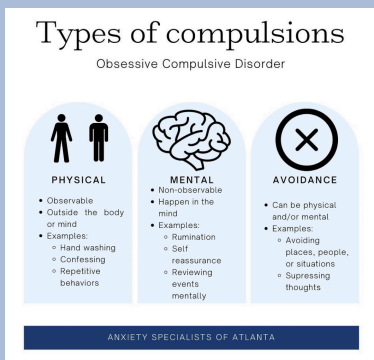
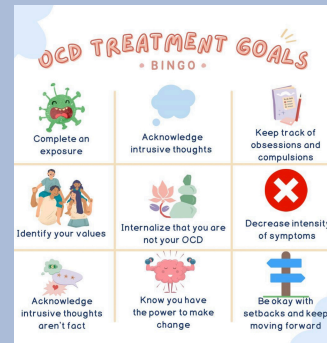




filled daily social media initiative, on both Instagram and Facebook, led by our social media manager (and staff therapist) Jessie Jensen, APC. We focus on accuracy of effective, science-backed resources, practical tips, and encouraging words of hope, as we continue to explore ways to expand our reach.

Daily themes include:

- **Motivation Monday:** words of hope, compassion, and advocacy
- **Talk about it Tuesday:** facts about OCD/anxiety, or about removing stigma
- **Why therapy Wednesday:** tips to prepare for therapy, what to expect from therapy, info about ERP, why ACT/CBT/ERP/etc. works or what it is
- **ASoA Thursday:** specific information about our team and services
- **Potpourri Friday:** general information, psychoeducation, something that happened that week/non-political current events involving mental health



If you aren't already following us, please connect with us on [Instagram](#) and on [Facebook](#)

## Connecting with Communities

Organized by staff therapist and supervisor, Jen Powell, LPC, our team and family members spent time volunteering with **Feed Marietta**, putting together personal bags, purchased diapers, and separated out portions of perishable foods.

Team OCD Avengers lead the way in Georgia as the top fundraiser for



the 9th straight year for the annual **IOCDF Million Steps for OCD** campaign, raising just under \$2,000 to expand access to mental health care and supporting mental health advocacy.



### **Financial Contributions to worthy causes:**

Our company has proudly donated over \$2,500 to the following organizations:

**International Medical Corps**, **The Victory Center** (providing exceptional education and services to children with autism and related disabilities), **the American Indian College Fund**, **Caminar Latino** (creating opportunities for Latino families to transform their lives and communities and works to change the social conditions that give rise to violence), **Thorn** (their mission is to eliminate child sexual abuse from the internet), **Be the Match** (helping patients afford their transplants, find matching donors and have successful outcomes), **TLC Foundation for BFRBs** (supporting efforts to grow awareness, build connections, and increase access to effective evidence-based treatments for the 1-in-20 individuals experiencing a BFRB, and those that love and support them), **Feed Marietta** (serving over 200 families in north Metro Atlanta by providing non-perishables, fresh produce, meat, and hygiene products to families in need), **Dunwoody Nature Center**, **St. Francis School**, **Griffin Middle School Music Program**, and the **International OCD Foundation**.

## **Professional Contributions**

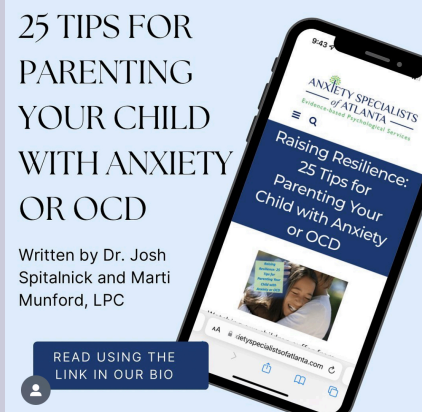
Our team was quite active in 2022 by developing innovative treatment options in group-based formats and authoring and disseminating best practices for parents and caregivers of anxious youth. Our team also presented a variety of talks this year to professional colleagues, family members and individuals with anxiety and OCD lived experience, and for media outlets to serve the community at large.

### **Publications**

One of the most notable professional contributions by our team was the publication of a resource guide, co-authored by Dr. Josh Spitalnick



and Marti Munford, LPC in late 2021, and published in the IOCDF's Spring 2022 Quarterly Newsletter. It was then shared widely by Nathan Peterson, LCSW on his amazing **OCD and Anxiety Made Simple** YouTube Channel (Click [HERE](#) for access). Josh and Marti have been invited presenters by a variety of local schools and organizations to share more about this helpful resource guide, and we have made it freely available for download on our website (Click [HERE](#) for access).



### **Clinical Training and Dissemination of Best Practices to Professionals**

Dr. Josh Spitalnick serves on the IOCDF's **Behavioral Training Therapy Institute (BTI)** faculty. He provides interactive, web-based training opportunities enabling clinicians to improve their skills in treating OCD and related disorders through a series of 90-minute small group sessions. Dr. Spitalnick also is part of a national team of OCD experts who provide in-depth three-day intensive training courses in exposure and response prevention therapy (ERP), a form of cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), for mental health professionals who are treating individuals with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and related disorders.

### **Professional Presentations and News Media**

Our staff has presented to a variety of local schools and Universities as well as online and in print news organizations, including Wesleyan School (Dr. Theresa Welles), St. Francis (Dr. Josh Spitalnick and Marti Munford, LPC), the Marcus Autism Center (Dr. Mosley), Georgia State University (Dr. Megan Faye), ADHD Linx (Marti Munford, LPC), [Self.com](#) (Dr. Josh Spitalnick), [Health.com](#) (Dr. Josh Spitalnick), [Atlanta-Journal Constitution](#) (Dr. Josh Spitalnick).

We have also been active presenting at ***international professional conferences***, including:

**Dr. Josh Spitalnick**, Dr. Amy Mariaskin, and Dr. Patrick McGrath. (March, 2022). Clinical Directors in the Private Sector: Training the Next generation of Anxiety/OCD Specialists and Expanding the Reach of EBPs. Presented at the



Anxiety and Depression Association of America's 2022 Annual Conference. Denver, CO.

Dr. Patrick McGrath, Jon Hershfield, MFT, and **Dr. Josh Spitalnick** (March, 2022). Teaching Patients How to Sit in Discomfort – It's Harder than you think it is. Presented at the Anxiety and Depression Association of America's 2022 Annual Conference. Denver, CO.

**Dr. Josh Spitalnick** and **Marti Munford, LPC** (July, 2022). Raising Resilience: 25 Tips for Parenting your Child with Anxiety or OCD. Presented at the 27th Annual International OCD Foundation's (IOCDF) Conference. Denver, CO.

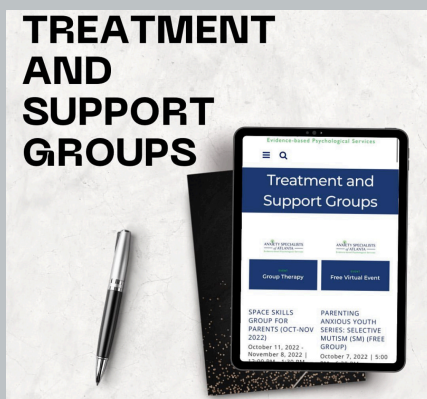
Beth Brawley, LPC and **Michael Stier, LCPC/LPC** (July, 2022). Chicken or the egg: When Depression and OCD team up. Presented at the 27th Annual International OCD Foundation's (IOCDF) Conference. Denver, CO.

Kelly Flanagan, LPC, Dr. Allen Weg, and **Dr. Josh Spitalnick** (October, 2022). From Generalist to Specialist: Supervision and Training of Anxiety Disorder Clinicians. Presented at the International OCD Foundation's (IOCDF) 2022 Online Conference.

Jon Hershfield, MFT, **Dr. Josh Spitalnick**, Dr. Nicholas Farrell, and Dr. Patrick McGrath (October, 2022). How to Customize Treatments for OCD Clients: Case Formulation + Creativity + Protocol Flexibility. Presented at the International OCD Foundation's (IOCDF) 2022 Online Conference.

## Group-based Services

Creativity was showcased in so many beautiful ways by our team as they worked hard to address the needs of adults and families who reached out to us. One of the clearest examples of this was the development of many new group-based services, rooted in evidence-based, compassionate care, to include support groups, skills groups, workshops, and exposure-based groups.





This list represents the new group services offered by our team just in 2022:

- a monthly free support group for spouses, partners, and adults in romantic relationships with people living with OCD
- a monthly free support group for adults who struggle with Trichotillomania, Dermatillomania, and other Body-focused Repetitive Behaviors (BFRBs)
- a monthly free group (Sundays) for kids ages 8-12 who have OCD
- an ARFID Workshop for adults with Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) and parents of children with ARFID to learn more about this diagnosis and how it is treated.
- a monthly series of free parenting seminars and workshops for parent of anxious kids
- an in-person interactive exposure group for adults with Social Anxiety
- an in-person teen Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) group

We are always looking to develop new groups to address gaps in treatment needs, so if there is a group idea you'd like us to consider, please contact our Clinical Director, Dr. Theresa Welles @ [drwelles@anxietyatl.com](mailto:drwelles@anxietyatl.com).

We continue to offer a variety of monthly FREE support groups, along with our low-cost group therapy services and family-focused workshops, including our most popular ones, such as:

- SPACE groups for parents of anxious youth
- OCD/Health Anxiety Support and Skills groups for Adults (18+)
- monthly support groups for family members of loved ones with OCD
- Support Group for Mothers of Anxious children. Learn to live with uncertainty, build confidence and encourage calm and joy, within the chaos of motherhood.
- In-person Social Anxiety groups for Adults (18+)

Check out our [Treatment and and Support Groups Page](#) to learn about all of our 2023 group offerings, as they are updated every month.





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