



Clinical Insights

from Dr. Josh Spitalnick



Halloween is behind us, the leaves are falling, the air is cooling, and we get an hour of sleep back this month (YAY!). Pumpkin spiced lattes and hot chocolate is flowing, apple cinnamon candles make any room smell yummy, and then there are the holiday decorations going up, the outdoor fires being lit, and the warm cozy blankets being pulled from the closets. I love the Fall season, especially all the sports on TV.

For many of us who are native to Atlanta, or who have been here most of our lives, this is that time of year where we begin to reflect on missed opportunities. We talk about the curse (not the Halloween curse), we wonder what terrible things we did to deserve such a drought. Perennial sadness is waiting for us each Fall. Maybe not clinical depression, but a kind of seasonal depression that so many of us in Atlanta seem to be afflicted by.

If you've lived in Atlanta for the last 25 years, you might already know what I am talking about. Around this part of the country, all you have to do is say "28-3,"

and you will see us Falcons fans get angry, depressed, and bitter in seconds (and probably curse out the coaches). Even our NBA team the Hawks got close this year, getting one game away from the NBA championship series, but hit a wall. For those who bleed Red and Black, why does Nick Saban keep crushing the dreams of us Bulldog fans?? And, seriously, how many times have the Braves been to the playoffs or World Series, with the series lead, without winning that elusive championship? It's not all about the rings or championships, I know, but c'mon...throw us a bone.

But alas, 26 years later, after the last major sports team in Atlanta won a championship (Major League Soccer does not count, sorry 5 Stripes), something magical finally happened.

As a reminder, one month ago, our Braves limped in to the postseason. But something felt different recently. For the last few weeks, us Atlantans have stayed up later and later, watching more baseball than we have in years, sleep deprived, but oddly optimistic. Men have been wearing pearls (thanks Joc). The Battery has been filled with thousands of fans, tailgating together. And finally, the dark sports cloud that has been hovering over the Peach State finally lifted. The curse IS broken. WE DID IT!!! Braves WIN! Braves WIN! Braves WIN!

If you didn't know, I'm a huge sports fan, and so are many on our staff. Dr. Shannan Edwards has named her last three cocker spaniels after a player on the Braves. She adopted her newest fur baby earlier this year and, staying with tradition, named him Freddie (for Freddie Freeman). Freddie not only hit a home run in his final at bat in Game 5, but he caught the ball at first base for the final out to win the whole thing. Shannan, maybe you broke our curse...

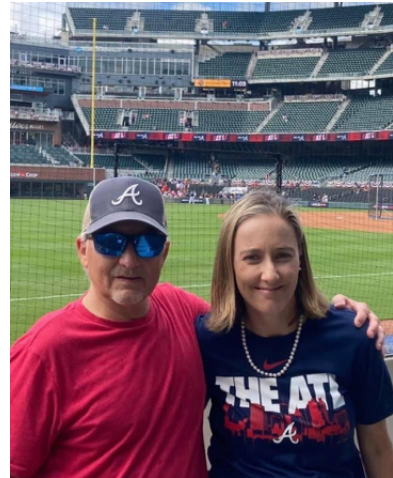
I'm not just here to share my love of sports, I'm sharing it because for many of us, it is one of our biggest joys, watching our sports team triumph. I'm sharing this because there have been so many amazing stories to come out about the Braves this season. Freddie has been with the Braves for over a decade through some abysmal years, the coach (Brian Snitker) has been with the organization for 45 years as a player and now head coach. Their dedication and perseverance paid off. There have been some amazing "comeback" stories of key players, including one that will definitely be made into a movie one day about relief pitcher, Tyler Matzek. He battled debilitating anxiety and the "yips," left baseball, and was then resurrected by the Braves organization ([Sports](#)

[Illustrated article link is here](#)). His perseverance, overcoming odds, fighting for what he loved, beating panic attacks, and getting back to the big game to pitch some of the best innings we will ever see in the postseason is, that's what it's all about! I hope we all chase what we love, even when we get knocked down or get overwhelmed with anxiety. He is an inspiration.

For so many of us, sports is also the great equalizer, giving us something to talk about at parties, something to dress up for, something to throw tailgates for. Sports gives us something to bond over with our kids, to reminisce



about those great games we went to with our parents, our grandparents, our sports team, or youth groups. It gives us a reason to take a road trip or chase that



once in a lifetime ticket with old and new friends. It's not political, it's not controversial(mostly), and it's definitely a "safe" topic for the Thanksgiving table. Mostly, for those of us who have waited over 25 years for this moment, sports brings us something to feel pure excitement for. And, something to look forward to next season when it starts all over.

Thank you Atlanta Braves for giving us so many great memories that will easily last another 25 years!!



Face your fears. Live with uncertainty. Take Control of your life.

Dr. Josh Spitalnick, CEO/Practice Owner

Licensed Psychologist

Board Certified in Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology

I can always be reached at drspitalnick@anxietyatl.com if you have any questions, concerns, or positive news to share!

Staff Updates

Dr. Spitalnick joining the BTTI Faculty

On average, it can take an individual with OCD 12 to 17 years from the onset of symptoms to receive a proper diagnosis and begin receiving effective treatment. The International OCD Foundation (IOCDF) is committed to changing that statistic.

In 1995, the IOCDF launched their flagship training opportunity for professionals called the Behavior Therapy Training Institute. In response to professionals asking for more opportunities to advance their skills, the IOCDF Training Institute has been created to offer a more comprehensive curriculum of professional training opportunities.



The Behavior Therapy Training Institute (BTTI) is an in-depth three-day intensive training course 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. The BTTI — led by a world-renowned faculty — was developed to help address the shortage of therapists properly trained in using CBT to treat OCD around the country and the world. These training offerings address a variety of specialties and issues pertaining to the OCD and related disorders community, including pediatric OCD, while also providing continuing education credits to qualified professionals.

Beginning in 2022, Dr. Spitalnick, along with other OCD experts, will be working with the IOCDF to offer virtual and in-person training workshops, online consultations and webinars to train clinicians around the world.

Congratulations to Dr. Spitalnick and the other OCD specialists who are joining the BTTI faculty, training the next generation of OCD specialists, increasing the number of OCD specialists globally, and helping to reduce the time it takes for someone to find an OCD specialist when their symptoms first show up.

Science Matters

Raising Resilience: Tips for Parenting Your Child with Anxiety or OCD

by Dr. Josh Spitalnick and Marti Munford, LPC

Watching our children suffer from anxiety can be painful, frustrating, and confusing. Every parent has wondered at one time or another if they are the cause of their child's struggles. Recognizing how influential and positive you can be in your child's anxiety or OCD recovery is the first step towards getting them proper care and support.

When you come to our clinic for treatment, there are consistent resources and recommendations our clinicians will provide you and your family, no matter who you are seen by. One of the most common is a helpful document authored by OCD expert Dr. Fred Penzel, titled "25 tips for Succeeding in your OCD Treatment." I (Dr. Spitalnick) personally provide this document to almost every single OCD sufferer and their loved ones as an immediate resource to learn from.

After sharing this invaluable document hundreds of times, I decided it was time to for us to create our own, but specifically for parents of kids with anxiety and

OCD. It's something I wish I had for my wife and I when we started working with our daughter in therapy. It's a resource that every parent should have, I believe, and Marti and I are thrilled to be sharing it with each of you.

Here are just a few of those 25 tips (in abbreviated form) to consider, with a link at the bottom to access the full resource on our website.

- **Communicating confidence in your belief that your child "can effectively cope and use their skills" is crucial.**
- **Family accommodations (FA) keep the family stuck. Being able to identify and shift away from accommodations is one of the first and most important steps to changing the cycles parents unknowingly engage in with their anxious child.**
- **Naming the OCD or worry monster can bring you and your child together.**
- **All family members are affected by a child's anxiety/OCD.**
- **Look for and praise big and small successes. This applies not only to the brave moments that you see in your child, but also in the patience and compassion that you and other family members provide to your child.**
- **Teach your child to live with fear, not in fear.**
- **Don't underestimate the importance of education and understanding. Psychoeducation IS the first phase of treatment.**
- **Take brave actions with your child, use humor when appropriate, and be compassionate to yourself and your child in the process of beating anxiety together. You can do this!**

I'm very proud to announce that such a resource has been created. We hope it provides the necessary balance of practical tips and techniques, compassion-filled guidance, and science-backed information that any anxiety specialist would recommend when working with parents of children and adolescents who suffer from OCD or other debilitating anxiety disorders.

For the full resource, "Raising Resilience: 25 Tips for Parenting the Child with Anxiety or OCD," Click Here

We See you

This section is dedicated to sharing important resources related to mental health disparities, clinical issues specific to diverse populations, populations who have limited access to mental health care, and the impact of cultural issues in psychotherapy. Discussions about inclusiveness, equity, and diversity makes us a stronger team and create a work culture that is more validating and empowering for us all.

November is Men's Mental Health Awareness Month

by Dr. Josh Spitalnick, Board Certified Psychologist
Practice Owner, Anxiety Specialists of Atlanta

What do Dak Prescott (NFL), Kevin Love (NBA), and Calvin Ridley (NFL) all have in common? Yes, they are all very strong, physical athletes. Yes, they have all made millions of dollars in their respective sports. Yes, they have all trained for years to be some of the best athletes at their positions. But the most important shared experience they all have is that they have each publicly prioritized their mental health, despite the undeniable stigma associated with men's mental health or that of being a "weak athlete." (and the same credit goes to Simone Biles and Naomi Osaka in recent months).



The stigma around mental health can be a barrier to seeking treatment for men and women. Yet, traditional and stereotypical gender norms continue to add a barrier for those men who may feel pressure to be perceived as strong. Or, they may simply believe that talking about mental health problems is a sign of weakness. It is not. It's a sign of bravery, of self-compassion, of honesty. And it is exactly the way to prevent a crisis.

So what do we know about men's mental health:

- One in eight men are diagnosed with a mental health problem every year,

- much lower than the actual rates of mental health issues men face
- About 30% of men in the United States have suffered from a period of depression in their lifetime
 - The suicide completion rate for men is 4x higher compared to women
 - Men are nearly 3x more likely than women to become alcohol dependent
 - Men are more likely to use (and die from) illegal drugs
 - Men living in small towns and rural areas have unusually high rates of suicide
 - There are very high rates of suicide among veterans and gay men. Some have attributed this to the fact that these groups of men may feel (whether it is real or not) rejected by society and mainstream media.
 - Depression in men often results in irritability, anger, hostility, risk-taking, and escaping behavior (rather than emotional, physical or social symptoms of depression commonly reported on by women)
 - 40% of men in crisis admit that they won't talk to anyone, citing reasons of embarrassment, not wanting to be a burden, or because they feel like they have no one to turn to
 - Men are also 67% less likely than women to see a doctor or reach out and tell somebody how they are feeling

"Movember" Movement

From grassroots efforts in 2003 when 30 men grew moustaches in Melbourne, Australia, to now, Movember has raised over \$1.2 billion and has funded more than 800 programs in over 20 countries saving and improving lives of men affected by prostate or testicular cancers or mental health problems.

Movember encourages men to be more open about mental health issues. The charity challenges mainstream negative aspects of masculinity and the impact it can have on mental health. The Movember Foundation aims to create more education and dialogue around redefining norms in masculinity while raising funds for prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and mental health problems.

There are various ways to get involved with Movember, whether it's growing facial hair (typical mustaches), hosting an event or setting physical fitness goals. As there are many ways to show support, the charitable organization Movember also recommends using four simple steps and some key questions (coined with the acronym ALEC) to help you navigate what could be a tough conversation with a man in your life.



ALEC:

- **ASK:** “You’ve not quite seemed yourself recently. Are you okay?”
- **LISTEN:** “That can’t be easy. How long have you felt that way?”
- **ENCOURAGE ACTION:** Suggest he tells other people he trusts how he’s feeling.
- **CHECK IN:** Show you care. Commit to catching up soon – in person if you can. If you can’t manage a meet-up, make time for a call, or drop him a message.

Other actions to consider for someone who doesn't seem open to talking about his emotional issues include:

- Simply spending time with him or helping him find people to spend time with that make him feel good
- Sending daily quotes or phrases that help him feel more hopeful and remind that "It's ok to not be ok"
- Plan to meet up for a meal and even invite him to an activity that you may not enjoy but that he definitely will
- Try to share some of your personal struggles and the steps you took to work on them, as a conversation starter, to let him know that opening up is ok and not a sign of weakness
- Do any physical activities with him as even light exercise has proven to help alleviate depression
- Remind him that you are always available to talk or listen without judgment
- If you are concerned about his safety or substance use, help identify a professional who can offer specific resources or instructions, especially if the person is in crisis

Men do not have to suffer in silence. If you or someone you know is in crisis, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline @ 1-800-273-8255**. The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States.

To learn about all the inspirational activities and resources from the Movember Foundation, [Click here](#)

Group Therapy & Support Groups

Join our monthly FREE Support Group for **Adults supporting other Adults with OCD**, whether it's a family member, a loved one, a spouse/partner, or your adult child. This group takes place securely over Zoom once per month, and it starts this month. This month it will take place at 8pm on October 18, 2021.



This is not a treatment group, it's a support group. This monthly group will provide a space for support and discussions about the do's and don'ts of supporting a loved one with OCD and/or health anxiety. We will discuss family accommodations, treatment considerations, and self-care in the process.

This group is led by Dr. Josh Spitalnick. It is held the 3rd Monday of every month, from 8-9pm. Each group will allow for up to 20 group

members.

No registration required, just click below to access access the Event page and the zoom link.

[**CLICK HERE to access details and the Zoom link**](#)

Join our monthly **FREE Divorce and Separation Support Group**.
This group takes place securely over Zoom.



This support group will provide a community of support and healing to help individuals move through the difficult process of ending and grieving a significant partner relationship. This group will be co-led by two of our Licensed Psychologists, Dr. Theresa Welles and Dr. Chris Noble. It will be held the last Wednesday of every month, from 6-7pm. Each group will allow for 20 group members, no registration required. Just click below to access access the Event page and the zoom link.

[**CLICK HERE to get full details and Register**](#)

Check out our [EVENTS](#) section of our website for descriptions, full flyers, and registration details for these and all other upcoming groups and events.



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