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Therapy Thoughts

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Welcome

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Hey there!

Winter is one of my favorite seasons. I am often inspired by the bright night sky, glistening white snow, the thrill that comes with winter sports, comforting food and drinks, and the rest that can come more easily when the sun sets early in the day.

I hope this edition brings you some information and enjoyment from my cozy home to yours this February! Thank you for reading!

With gratitude,

Maria

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WHY IS THERAPY EXPENSIVE? IT'S REALLY NOT BECAUSE THERAPISTS ARE GREEDY

If you are in therapy and paying privately, you may be wondering why the fee for your sessions just went up in the new year. If you are looking for a therapist, you might be wondering why it is so expensive to pay out of pocket. I am often asked why a therapist would choose to be an out-of-network provider (meaning why they would not take insurance) and why the rates are so high. Now I am not an economist, but I am a small business owner in the mental health field and I'd like to offer my perspective.

First, I think many therapists struggle with setting rates for their practice and many actually charge less than what they need to charge to keep up with the market. I have met many therapists who are uncomfortable charging market prices because their training involves learning about poverty, inaccessible care, and the harmful systems that keep people from achieving wealth and stability. It can be uncomfortable and pose moral conflicts for therapists to charge a high rate when they know it will not be accessible to lots of people; however, is it really the therapist's fault when the healthcare system is failing all of us? If our healthcare system was designed to provide more accessible care and higher (and easier) reimbursement to therapists, therapists would not be in this position! There are a few main reasons why therapists, including myself, choose to be out-of-network:

- The therapist gets to determine treatment type, length, frequency, and can offer unique services that insurance plans may not cover. This means therapy can be more client-centered and is not determined by an insurance plan.
- Therapists lack the time and staff to assist in billing insurance plans, which means if they were to take that on themselves, they would have less time to see clients, do continuing education training, and give back to their community in other ways such as volunteering or providing pro bono services. They would also have less time for self-care, which would eventually lower the quality of client care!

Another reason clients may feel that therapy is a big expense is that therapists need to increase their rates at times for various reasons. Here are some common examples:

- Therapists go through extensive schooling and many have student loan payments that take a large chunk of their income. For some therapists, they would not even be able to afford housing or other basic needs due to their student loans. Their rates must reflect the thousands of dollars they pay back in student loans.
- Just like everything else, prices go up. Keeping up with market price and inflation is essential. If we keep a low value for therapy while everything else increases, therapists will never be able to afford being therapists and there goes private practitioners! We need the small businesses in our community and economy, especially when they often provide quality care.
- Training can cost thousands of dollars and it is a requirement for therapists to obtain continuing education to keep their license.

We also need to remember that therapists have their own families, costs of living, and fees associated with owning a business. It gets expensive to be a therapist!

Could there be therapists out there who are greedy and don't actually care about your well-being? Sure, just like there can be bad lawyers, doctors, and other professionals, but the majority of therapists struggle with setting their rates and really want therapy to be accessible. If private pay is not an option for you, which would be completely understandable, please do not give up hope. Check out openpathcollective.org or check with your insurance company for in-network providers. Plenty of therapists also keep a certain amount of sliding scale spots available so you can always ask upon reaching out, even if they do not advertise this.

Looking for help on how to find the right therapist for you? Check out my suggestions in a previous [newsletter](#).

Inclusive Adventures: Making Outdoor Activities Accessible to Everyone

Written By Maria Antell, LCSW

Historically, outdoor spaces have been claimed by cisgender white people who have created barriers for the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) community through political, economic, and social forces; however, we would be wrong to think that there is a lack of wisdom and intuition within these communities when it comes to surviving and thriving in the outdoors or that the BIPOC community does not currently belong in the outdoors. There are stories missing from my education: the ones that celebrate and honor individuals in the BIPOC community who literally trailblazed through the nation. As a white female who benefits from living on this land, I want to support businesses and leaders who are working to bring inclusivity to the outdoors and I deeply want to understand the true history of our land and the people who have always belonged but were purposefully kept out.

After reading *Wild Girls*, written by Tiya Miles, I've been reflecting on her stories of women throughout history who have shaped where we are today because of their relationship with the outdoors, many of whom are not well understood. Her narrative of Harriet Tubman's journey to freedom through the woods stands out to me; how, among many other skills, she learned to follow the North Star to the northern states, forage for food, to utilize the wilderness as a guide despite having a head injury. Ms. Tubman's incredible skill set allowed her to save so many lives and I can't say that I know many people who could travel the wilderness today like she did, as many times as she did, and make it out alive. In reference to the historical female figures in her book, Tiya Miles writes, "Together, the girls featured here, some famous and others who should be better known, make up a newly conjoined cast of historical actors who navigated their social world differently because of their experience in the outdoor world." Most of us know about Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, a white boy who flees from abuse and embarks on a journey with a runaway slave down the Mississippi River, but what about the girls who escaped danger, dreamed, trained, healed, taught, and shaped generations after them? Ms. Tubman was a woodswoman. Her fortitude in the woods is the same that other girls and women showed when they took to the streets for voting rights, assembled outdoors to join picket lines, fought to run in marathons, and marched for civil rights that are still threatened today.

Being outdoors is a part of our political life and it is also a part of being human. We need the outdoors if we want to live well. Studies have illustrated that outdoor spaces, particularly green spaces and spaces with water, provide mental health benefits. One 2019 [study](#) recommended that healthcare providers prescribe time in green spaces to help mitigate stress, anxiety, and depression, and that city planning should incorporate accessible green spaces in urban areas. It is an atrocity that the BIPOC community has been strategically removed from having access to green spaces, harmed through environmental racism, and then subsequently denied access to valuable land as it was claimed by a certain gender, race, age, and/or people with only certain abilities or body shapes/sizes. We still have a long way to go when it comes to equity in the outdoors, access to green spaces, affordable gear, and clothing/gear for all body types, but I have researched a list of organizations that seem to be dedicated to this purpose.

Whether you are trying to support the businesses working toward a more inclusive and accessible world, want to share this information with a friend or family, or could benefit from these resources and companies, I hope you can enjoy this list and feel empowered to get outdoors. You belong in nature if that is where you want to be!

Local/NYC Resources:

Outdoor Afro: Offers meetups and teaches leadership skills for adults and children through various outdoor experiences.

Hoods to Woods: Helps teens in Brooklyn and the tri-state area with snowboarding and mentoring.

Unlikely Hikers: A diverse, anti-racist, body-liberating outdoor community featuring the underrepresented outdoorsperson.

Gear and Brands:

Outdoor Element: Native American owned. Adventure and survival gear.

Alpine Parrot: Latina owned and operated. Plus size gear.

Tough Cutie: Black woman owned. Hiking socks.

Itacate: Latina owned. Latin Backpacking Food (vegetarian and vegan options).

Allmansright: Ultralight gear made in the Bronx.

Pescavore: Provides on the go seafood that is sustainable and low impact on the environment.

Kinsa Active: Plus size outdoor clothing for hiking, fishing, and snow sports.

Wondery Outdoors: Plus size outdoor clothing focused on style and comfort up to 6XL.

Other Leaders in Outdoor Adventure who are Empowering Others:

- Nicole Snell at Girls Fight Back: Empowering girls and women to learn self-defense and skills for solo travel and engagement in the outdoors.
- Kanoa Greene at NAKOA Adventure: Adventures for plus size folx.
- Lestarya Tuadi Molloy at Fridie Outdoors: Teaches and empowers all people the camping skills they need to safely enjoy camping.
- Alison Mariella Désir: Author of Running While Black, founder of Harlem Run, co-founder of Women of Color Take the Lead Retreat, and leader in many other projects focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Andrea DiMaio at Ample Movement: Body inclusive yoga instructor, hiker, and outdoor adventurer.
- Alina Drufouka at Abstract Hikes: Latina Jewish Painter and thru-hiker. Sells apparel, prints, and more.
- Parker McMullen Bushman: Black Environmentalist, outdoor enthusiast, & social justice activist. Co-founder of Inclusive Guide.

Run Club for Mental Health- Coming Spring 2024!

Dates and Location TBD



This is not your average run club! The purpose of this inclusive run club is to experience collective joy while engaging in movement. This group is designed for beginners who want to learn how to run for mental health. Experienced runners may also join and they **MUST** be accepting of walking intervals as runs will blend both walking and running. This is not an exercise group and this run club does not encourage weight loss. This club uses a Health at Every Size® approach, meaning it is committed to celebrating and respecting bodies of all shapes and sizes.

Share the joy of running, build self-esteem, socialize, get outdoors, and have fun! Sliding scale will be available upon request.

Reserve your spot or inquire by texting/calling Maria at 845-458-1301 or emailing at maria@forwardmotioncounselinglcsw.com

CONQUERING THE TRAIL AND THE PATRIARCHY



The women's body liberation support group took place over 6 weeks and blended mindfulness, education, movement, and nature based therapy to improve each member's relationship with body, movement, and food. By moving together through the winter months and challenging diet culture through a feminist lens, we created our own little community of support. This group will likely run again next winter. Follow me on social media and make sure you are subscribed to this newsletter for future group announcements!



In the Media

Running as a revolt, By Jo Stephens

7 Organizations Making Skiing More Inclusive for BIPOC, By Lily Ritter & Samantha Berman

Running and Redlining, By Molly Mastantuono

How Trail Running Saved A Top Chef From Addiction, By Nicholas Triolo

Therapists Trade the Couch for the Great Outdoors, By Christina Caron

Katherine Switzer Reveals When It's Alright to Break the Rules, By Theo Kahler

Please stay in touch!
If you have questions
about my work or have
a suggestion for a topic
you'd like me to write
about, I'd love to hear
from you.

