



Thao Nguyen Foundation Inc. Newsletter

Second Issue December 2013

TOGETHER, WE BRING LIGHT TO MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

IN THIS ISSUE

Greetings from the President

by Nhung Nguyen, Ph.D.

Welcome to the second newsletter of Thao Nguyen Foundation, Inc. Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. Since the first newsletter was published in July, I'm happy to report that we have been able to award a one-time scholarship to Sarah Kerr in the amount of \$500. Sarah is now attending Stevenson University. Her plan is to become a nurse. Let's wish her well as we need more nurses working with mental health patients.

In September, the Foundation launched the first Research Grant Funding initiative. The purpose of this Grant is to fund research that validates current treatment options or seeks new treatment options for people affected by mental illness. Applications are due December 1st 2013 and the Grant Award will be announced by January 1st of 2014. For more information about the grant

application, please visit the foundation website at www.tnscholarshipforthearts.org.

I'm also happy to announce that the Second Annual Thao's Into the Light Race will be held in Baltimore on 5/24/2014. Please mark your calendar and join us. More information will be posted on the foundation website in due course.

As the holidays approach, please consider making a year-end tax deductible contribution to TN Foundation. The Foundation cannot fulfill its mission without your support. Donation can be made online through our secure website or mailed to our office at 9228 Bellbeck Road, Parkville MD 21234.

Thanks for your support and have a healthy and happy holiday season!

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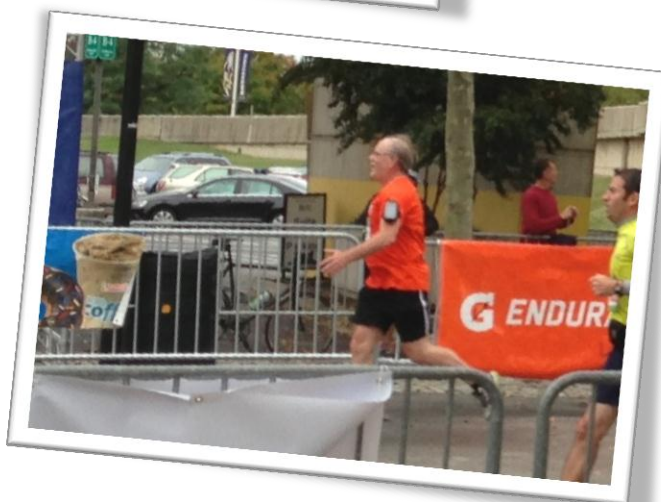
Run for a Cause

By William Smith, Ph.D.

When was the last time you went running?

When each one of us was two years old we ran around so much we drove our parents crazy. As children we continued running, though with less frequency as we got older. At some point we stopped playing tag or soccer. There were no more gym classes to take. We lost our reasons to run. So we just stopped.

Every runner has a story. Mine is not so dramatic. I started running about four years ago. As a whim I signed up for a neighborhood 5K. I did ok, and I wanted to do better. So I ran another 5K. And then another. Wanting to take the experience further, I signed up for my first half-marathon. Now I've got the bug. On October 13th 2013, I finished my fifth half-marathon.



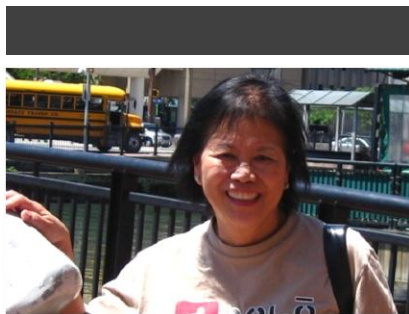
William Smith near the finish line on 10/12/2013 Baltimore's Half Marathon

I get a lot of accolades and attention from my running. It feels nice of course. But I'm also humble. After all, running is so simple. Almost anyone can do it. You just have to want to.

Every weekend there are a multiple running events in any given area. Part of the explanation is that like golfers, mountain bikers and other sports participants, runners are passionate about what we do. We're always looking forward to the "next race". But there's another reason. If you look at a list of running events, most are devoted to supporting a particular cause. Many runners have overcome some challenge in their lives; and running has helped them meet that challenge. And all runners have people close to them who have suffered in some way. Running is a way of bonding with people who have shared those challenges. Running events also build awareness, thereby helping to develop a sense of empowerment.

I dedicated this year's run to support the Thao Nguyen Foundation because I believe it will have a needed impact. Since my career is in higher education, I know that scholarships play an important role in helping young people reach their full potential. Also, by honoring Thao's memory we are building awareness for mental health intervention. The burden of Thao's loss is heavy, but need not stop us from moving forward. We are in a fortunate position of learning, growing and keeping our eye on the finish line: we cannot afford to neglect our young people. Whatever your race is, whatever your cause, whatever your ability... never stop running.





Meet Sumalai Maroonroge, Ph.D., a frequent donor to TN Foundation



Thao in Marseilles, France, outside the train station last Fall (9/12/2012)

Vulnerability to Depression Can Be Contagious

By Gerald J. Haefel and Jennifer L. Hames

How we perceive stressful events, interpret them, and process them has a major impact on our ability to cope adaptively with them. For example, people with cognitive vulnerabilities might perceive events more negatively, feel more helpless about them, and ruminate about them, while non-cognitively vulnerable people might see the same events as less dire, feel less paralyzed by them, take them less personally and respond to them more positively.

Much research has demonstrated that the negativity associated with cognitive vulnerability is a risk factor for depression. While our thinking and coping styles – whether they make us cognitively vulnerable or not—are often established by the time we reach late adolescence, they can still change. The current study assumed that a person's cognitive style might be more susceptible to change during a significant life transition—starting college.

The researchers gave incoming students a battery of tests before they moved in with their randomly assigned roommates, another set of tests three months into the semester, and another six months later. Dong so allowed them to assess the cognitive style of the participants and see whether their cognitive style changed over time and in which direction.

Findings indicated that students who were not classified as cognitively vulnerable themselves but roomed with a person who was, 'caught' their roommate's maladaptive cognitive style. As a result, they showed more evidence of cognitive vulnerability at the three month mark, and even had twice as many symptoms of depression at the six month mark. The results were so

significant (given the short period of time), the researchers hypothesized this effect might not be limited to situations of major life transitions.

Cognitive vulnerability refers to specific forms of thinking in which the person interprets events negatively, feels helplessness or hopeless about them, and ruminates about negative events and feelings. However, it is possible to mitigate the impact of being around people who tend to think in such negative ways. Here are some suggestions:

1. Become aware. Pay attention to the cognitive styles of those around you and do not take another person's negativity as 'truth' but as a potentially overly-negative way of thinking about which you can 'agree to disagree'.
2. Modify your own negativity. Optimism is something that can be learned. If you catch yourself in a cycle of negative thinking, stop and balance out your thoughts with reasonable but positive ways of thinking about the same events.
3. Suggest positive interpretations. College roommates spend a lot of time together and often become close friends. When appropriate, offer the other person other ways of thinking about the situation that might make them feel less hopeless and more proactive.
4. Hang out with positive people. Since the influence of cognitive vulnerability can go both ways, adding positive, optimistic, proactive, folks to your circle of friends (or introducing them to your roommate) can counterbalance the negative impact a roommate or close friend can have on your own emotional well-being.



Forging Future partnerships

In an effort to increase the foundation's presence in public awareness, we will sponsor a team of runners at next year Baltimore's half marathon. Contact Ms. Nhung Nguyen at nhung@tnscholarshipforthearts.org if you're interested in joining.

DO YOU KNOW?

Young, Fang, & Zisook (2010, Journal of Affective Disorders) reported that Asian American students, especially Korean Americans reported a significantly higher level of depression than Chinese American and White students.

Regehr, Glancy, & Pitts (2013) in a meta-analysis published in the Journal of Affective Disorders reported that cognitive, behavioral and mindfulness interventions were associated with decreased symptoms of anxiety and depression among college students.

IF YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE AN ARTICLE

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