Therapeutic Karate
Aimed at children between 9 and 14 years, this sensori-motor programme teaches self-regulation and inner discipline in a fun, friendly, safe and therapeutic context. Page 2

Therapeutic Tai Chi
This is moving meditation for the integration of mind and body and soul. Page 3

Cognitive Training
This is our newest and most progressive project. Relying on the latest ‘neurolearning’ research, we provide computer assisted training of the brain to learn in intentional and self-directed ways. Page 2

Assessment
We conduct a number of different types of assessments to meet our clients’ needs. Page 2

Treatment
We offer traditional, individual, CBT based psychotherapy for all clients. For children, we are now providing group intervention in innovative ways. Page 3

Consultation
We provide consultation to clients who want a psychological perspective about their current circumstances. Page 4

Movement, Growth & Change
If there’s one thing that we can count on in life, it’s change and we have had many changes in our practice this year. We’ve moved to a new location and now provide our clients with an expanded range of services.

Our New Services and Programs...
We have moved to provide our clients with an expanded range of services including a sensory-motor approach to psychotherapy with body/mind movement classes like therapeutic tai chi, therapeutic yoga and therapeutic karate.

For our younger clients coping with difficulties like anxiety, trauma and self-regulation problems, we are offering a small group course in therapeutic karate. Ours is a ‘no contact’ and noncompetitive Dojo (training hall). For our older clients, we offer ‘moving meditation’ classes in the form of Therapeutic Tai Chi and Therapeutic Yoga.

Also new is our very exciting Cognitive Training programme using leading edge computer assisted learning technologies. Our emphasis is on language and literacy, as well as memory and learning. We provide 1:1 Educational Coaching for kids in school.

Our Traditional Services...
Psychology Works has solid roots in assessment and treatment in Clinical and Educational psychology. We are a group of interdisciplinary therapists and educators that work collaboratively and independently with a wide range of clients.

Treatment is offered for children, youth and adults with clinical problems in the areas of trauma, anxiety, depression and anger. We work with couples and families in the context of trauma and adverse life events. We work with multidisciplinary teams of health care providers. We also work with children and youth with school related problems.

Assessment in the clinical area is related primarily to trauma and adjustment for individuals and their families. Assessment of children and youth focuses on the diagnosing of learning problems at school and adjustment problems at home or in the community.

We are experienced in working with families in crisis, typically in the context of catastrophic, sudden and unexpected trauma. More recently, we are working with families in the context of interpersonal violence and high conflict divorce. We provide comprehensive, multidisciplinary nontraumatic intervention protocols for families in conflict to reduce harm to children and their families.

After Almost 20 Years...
For our past clients, it has been a privilege to work along with you during some very adverse life events. For our existing clients, we appreciate and value your confidence and trust. For our clients yet to come, we look forward to working with you in an often difficult journey towards creating a more balanced and self-directed life.

To learn more about our changes, please visit our new website: www.psychologyworks.net

Dr. Dawn DeCunha, Psychologist
Therapeutic Karate

Therapeutic Karate classes are for Children with Anxiety, Trauma and Self Regulation problems.

There has been some excellent research about the importance of movement and exercise in the treatment of ADD/ADHD and other disorders. Certain exercises, when supervised and done correctly in a therapeutic context, can promote better brain integration. The exercises activate specific areas of the brain, which promotes synaptic growth, which in turn can give us better control over dysregulated externalizing behaviors like impulsivity, inattention and acting out. The exercises taught in therapeutic karate can also be helpful with internalizing behaviors like withdrawal, anxiety or depression. We are fun, friendly and professional!

Karate begins and ends with respect. Gichen Funakoshi

Cognitive Training

Integrating an Individualized Remedial Plan (IRP) and Leading Edge Computer Assisted Learning to Enhance Reading, Memory and Learning

If you have or know someone who has a learning disability, you know how frustrating it can be to learn. Up until recently, many of the strategies for dealing with these issues were difficult for both children and adults, and progress was slow.

With the latest neuroscience research now discovering that the brain can organize and grow in capacity far more than originally thought possible, there have been some progressive steps forward in the remediation of these previously assumed ‘fixed’ disabilities.

Language learning and Reading acquisition

This programme is for young children struggling with learning how to read or those diagnosed with a language or communication disorder.

Cognitive training technologies have developed interactive programs that have been shown in a number of studies to have very significant beneficial outcomes in the remediation of language and memory problems. Reading and comprehension abilities have been shown to improve one full grade level in one semester when strict protocols are followed. Cognitive training technologies are widely used in the U.S. and are currently being investigated by Canadian School Boards. This promising tool helps teachers help kids that struggle with learning. More than 1,000,000 students have taken these programs in over 40 countries. We are pleased to offer the full range of Fast ForWord and CogMed computer assisted learning programs.

Clinical and Psychoeducational Assessment

A basic tenant in health care is ‘before treating, diagnose.’

Without an appropriate diagnose, we may miss important elements to help support our clients. This is as true in psychology as it is in other branches of health care. At Psychology Works, we conduct a number of different types of assessments so that the client, their family and referring professionals can better understand the critical psychological issues, how they emerged and what to do about them. We have extensive experience in working with both adult and pediatric clients.

We routinely assess clinical disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Learning Disabilities, Anger Regulation, Anxiety Spectrum disorders especially Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Autism Spectrum and Adjustment Disorders, Mood Disorders and disruptive disorders of childhood like Conduct and Oppositional Defiant Disorder.

Therapeutic Karate develops:

~ Motor skills like balance, strength flexibility and coordination
~ Listening skills and the ability to follow instructions quickly & efficiently
~ Executive skills like shifting, inhibition and impulse control
~ Memory and Learning skills like attention, concentration and focusing

Dr. DeCunha teaches classes with her co-therapist, Max. They both hold a black belt in Shorin Ji Karate, a traditional Okinawan style. They are members of Zen Bei Butoku Kai International. With 30 years of experience in karate and as many years in psychology, Dr. D. blends the ancient traditional physical art of Okinawan karate with the latest research findings in brain based sensorimotor therapy.

Clinical and Psychoeducational Intervention

After we do an assessment and identify your child’s learning needs, we are available to assist you with advocacy in helping you get the assistance you need, whether in our own clinic, or another facility.

For youth and adults, social and emotional barriers may be more prominent than learning needs. After we assess your specific needs, we provide treatment, refer to colleagues or community based centers for assistance.
Moving Meditation & Awareness to de-stress

Typhoons roar, worlds collide, I remain undisturbed.

From The Heart Sutra

One of the many challenges we all face is the accelerated pace of our lives. Stress and time pressures are everywhere and unavoidable in our home and work lives. De-stressing with a Moving Meditation like Therapeutic Tai Chi or Therapeutic Yoga is one of the most beneficial things you can do for yourself. Non pharmaceutical, non-intrusive, holistic and natural, Therapeutic Tai Chi is a self-care intervention that promotes the integration of physical and mental processes. This can result in ‘inner equanimity’, the ability to remain undisturbed in highly stressful situations.

In addition to learning how to breathe more beneficially and relax deeply, there is an emphasis on gently conditioning the body. Recent research into sensory motor (or body based) psychotherapy emphasizes the importance of incorporating body movement, with awareness for better mental and emotional self-regulation.

Cognitive Training and Brain Plasticity

You learn something every day if you pay attention. – Ray LeBlond

With the latest neuroscience research now discovering that the brain can self-organize and grow in information processing capacity far more than originally thought possible, there have been some progressive steps forward in the remediation of these previously assumed ‘fixed’ disabilities. Our other new program is a computer assisted, intensive cognitive training program. Primarily geared for children and adults with moderate to severe learning disabilities or other cognitive compromise (i.e., traumatic brain injury), this program is particularly appropriate for younger children encountering reading or other language-based learning problems.

Therapeutic Tai Chi

The mind is everything. What you think you become.

Buddha

If you have ever had the experience of doing Tai Chi, you know how simultaneously energizing and relaxing it can be. Originating from the Chinese martial arts tradition, Tai Chi has developed into a system of health self-care that promotes well-being at the physical, mental and energy (chi) levels. Recent research has shown how the movements of tai chi can help to balance brain wave activity and enhance inner focus. Considered an ‘inner art’, tai chi is a ‘moving meditation’ rather than a sitting meditation.

The sustained practice of tai chi helps to regulate and integrate body and mind processes to develop ‘body coherence’ through a number of mental and physical exercises. Many of these exercises are especially beneficial for stress and trauma related problems. Masters of this art believe that the most difficult battles are the internal ones. Therapeutic tai chi is a mental and behavioral self regulation skill that develops balance, coordination, strength, stamina and flexibility. The mental exercises help develop memory, focus and the ability to ignore distractions. The integrated mind-body exercises are ‘mind full’ in nature, with emphasis on physical rather than the mental. It is a way of increasing self and other awareness.

From Stress to Success: Overcoming Trauma

"It takes two to speak the truth. One to speak, and another to hear." ---Henry David Thoreau

Whether it’s a single traumatic event or a series of events that have created a trauma response, there are safe and effective therapeutic tools that can be used to help people overcome Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and related problems. Potentially, treatment can even transform these overwhelming ordeals into fuel that helps create greater understanding, awareness and resolution in a persons life.

To be able to do this requires not only the commitment of the person dealing with the trauma, it also requires the commitment of a dedicated team of professionals who can work with the person (or family) to help resolve the emotional charge of an adverse event so that you can move through it, leave it in the past where it belongs, create a more constructive meaning around it and then move forward. There are a number of tools that have been found very helpful in the treatment of trauma including EMDR, CBT, TI-CBT, Hypnosis and some integrative body-based therapies like Yoga and Tai Chi.

Self-Regulation

“So you think you’re in control?”

Charles Barkley

If there is one common theme that underlies many of the issues that we see here at the clinic, it is the issue of underdeveloped self regulation (SR). Self-regulation is the ability to regulate your own thoughts, emotions and behaviors. SR is broken down into Emotional (and Behavioral) SR and Cognitive SR. Emotional Self-Regulation refers to being able to inhibit or stop the behavioral impulse to express an emotion (anger, fear, sadness, anxiety) by externalizing behavior (shouting, fighting) or internalizing behaviors (withdrawing, isolating).

Cognition means to think. Metacognition means to think about your thinking. Attention concentration, working memory, shifting from one task to another are examples of skills that need to be actively developed in some individuals for better self-regulation. Being able to manage emotions so that one does not become overwhelmed and act out or withdraw or avoid difficult situations requires emotional self-regulation. Cionsciously and intentionally developing the ability to maintain balance and self-control, especially in stressful situations is adaptive, prosocial and constructive to one’s life.
We are a Community Based Interdisciplinary Practice

We at Psychology Works are committed to reducing and preventing the harmful effects of trauma in any form, including sudden and unexpected adverse events, long term family violence and conflict or interpersonal intolerance in our schools and communities. We are particularly committed to the Children in our community, their parents and those that assist them.

Families in Crisis

One third of marriages are ending in divorce creating havoc in the lives of all family members. Children caught in a high conflict divorce are particularly vulnerable.

Divorce trauma is now being recognized as a unique area of practice and intervention due to the very harmful effects of parental conflict on children. Parents fight because they are entrenched in their own views, rather than their children’s needs.

Witnessing parental conflict can create vicarious trauma to children and is widely recognized as having adverse and long term consequences to children and their development throughout the life span. When asked, we intervene on behalf of the children.

Non-traumatic Reunification

One of the many adverse outcomes to children is that they become estranged from a parent for a number of reasons. Sometimes they are afraid of a parent and will refuse contact, creating even more problems for themselves and their parents.

Assessment and Intervention

We are developing expertise in the assessment and treatment of children caught in a high conflict divorce. Depending on a child’s age, current methods to reunite children with an estranged parent creates further trauma and indeed, re-enacts the well known phenomenon of re-victimization of the most vulnerable family members - our children.

We employ trauma informed, evidence based cognitive and behavioural interventions to help children understand how their fears developed and what to do about them. We inform and work collaboratively with parents to support their children in a non-traumatic programme of reunification. We undertake a thorough assessment to identify the factors that contributed to, and maintain maladaptive behaviour.

We view ourselves as facilitators of the reunification process, rather than as experts who impose our views on others. We educate parents so that they can make informed decisions about the likely outcomes of their conduct in their children’s lives. We teach children how to cope with what they cannot control.

“Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius -- and a lot of courage -- to move in the opposite direction.”

Attributed to Albert Einstein

Dr. Dawn DeCunha, Psychologist

Dr. DeCunha is a registered psychologist with practice in Clinical and Educational psychology. She opened the Psychology Works private clinic almost 20 years ago and looks forward to working within her community for many more years.

Dr. DeCunha has a special interest in working with children and their families. She is committed to informing and educating those interested and involved in the care and raising of children about how incredibly complex and fragile children are, about their phenomenal potential to learn, their resiliency and the profound (and often permanent) impact adults have in their lives - for better or worse.

Dr. DeCunha is committed to reducing harm in all ways, increasing awareness, teaching prosocial skills and informing her clients, of all ages, about evidence based psychology, so that they can make better, more informed decisions about themselves, their children and their families.

Our Location

Our new clinic is conveniently located minutes away from highways 401, 404 & 407, off Woodbine Avenue in Markham:

2800 John St. Unit 11
Markham, Ontario
L3R 0E2

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

Contact Information

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