

Monthly Newsletter Double Feature

March 2025

Meet Our LAPC Supervised Clinicians

We are excited to highlight two of Mind Matter's LAPC Supervised Clinicians this month—Ariana and Rachel.

- Ariana is based at our Orwigsburg location and provides compassionate, client-focused care to those seeking support.
- Rachel splits her time between our Orwigsburg and Wyomissing locations, offering flexible scheduling and personalized therapeutic approaches.

Both clinicians are under expert supervision and offer services through a variety of insurance options, as well as self-pay options for greater accessibility.

We're proud of the hard work and dedication both Ariana and Rachel bring to Mind Matters. If you're interested in learning more or scheduling an appointment, please don't hesitate to reach out!



Clinician Spotlight:
Ariana Ansel, MS, LAPC



Clinician Spotlight:
Rachel Rubright, MA, LAPC

Mindfulness Retreat

In October, I and three other clinicians (Rachel Rubright, LAPC, and interns Tori and Gianna) held a retreat at a local lavender farm with the aim of helping participants learn more about nature therapy and mindfulness exercises to practice in the warm weather. With the mountains and fall foliage providing a serene backdrop, the retreat started with a discussion of the benefits of nature and mindfulness practices. Clients were given the opportunity to experience these benefits themselves with a demonstration of sensory grounding and guided meditation using the acronym RAIN: recognize your emotion, allow the experience, investigate where it comes from, nurture yourself with self-compassion.

The main event was a walk through the property, touring the lavender fields and meeting a few of the animals on the farm. During the walk, clients had the opportunity to complete a nature scavenger hunt and collect natural elements that spoke to them for later activities. For example, I collected red leaves, blue rocks, and small acorns. Others collected fern leaves, pinecones, and patches of moss. Mindfulness skills were practiced throughout the walk to give clients additional experience utilizing these skills in real-time. Upon returning to the pavilion where the walk began, clients were given an opportunity to discuss a few of the items they found and why they picked them up. Then, clients took all their objects and created nature mandalas- a peaceful meditative practice that aims to aid in finding patterns in nature while intentionally creating them with natural objects. My own mandala is shown as a reference. This activity was yet another opportunity for clients to see the art and beauty in nature and try their hand at intentionally creating their own piece of natural art with objects they felt connected to.

The retreat finished with a short yoga practice. A sun salutation was modified for length and ease of movement for all clients to be able to comfortably participate from a standing or seated position. The practice yoga poses included standing wave stretches, mountain pose, and a forward fold. This portion of the day taught clients the importance of breathwork and introduced the concept of flow: losing yourself in an activity and becoming so focused that you do not pay attention to the time that has passed or all that you've accomplished, simply enjoying the steps and process of an activity. Before leaving the lavender farm, clients were given a lavender clipping to take home and remind themselves of the day, the knowledge gained, and the feelings of being in nature as the year progressed into the colder winter months.

This spring, we are hoping to host the same opportunity, for clients within the practice and anyone else who would like to join! The aim of this spring's retreat is the same as before: to help clients learn mindfulness techniques to take advantage of the warm weather and connect with nature. The activities will be the same as those described here, with a spring twist to fit the warmer weather. Be on the lookout for sign-ups! If a long retreat day does not fit your schedule, but you enjoy being in nature, watch for openings on weekends for walk-and-talk sessions in local parks as the weather starts to warm up!

-Ariana Ansel

Mindfulness Retreat



Taking a walk

As the weather finally warms up and the sun stays out a bit longer, it means that we have reached the time of year to start heading outside. With the spring season coming into bloom we have the opportunity to embrace the outdoors after a long period of staying inside. One benefit of the long Pennsylvania winter is that the longer it encourages us to stay inside, the greater the feeling of joy we get in the spring.

The term Biophilia was used by naturalist Edward O. Wilson to describe the feeling of desire that humans have for reconnecting to nature, coming from the root words for life bio, and love philia (Swank et al., 2020). Simply going outside allows for that biophilic connection to occur, bringing us joy and satisfaction by the nature of being in nature. One way of establishing that connection outside is by taking a walk. Some benefits of walking include:

- Improved cardiovascular health
- Increased serotonin
- Lower cortisol
- Mindfulness opportunities
- Increased appreciation for nature

Walk and talk therapy is a variety of therapy that allows for all the benefits mentioned above to be combined into a psychotherapeutic setting (Udler, 2023). Client and clinician walk side by side in predetermined locations, engaging in traditional talk therapy, while experiencing the outdoors. If this is something that interests you, please let us know! With the increasingly nice weather, means upcoming chances to be a part of a walk and talk group during the later spring season. If this is something you would like to partake in, please keep an eye out, or reach out to schedule.

In the meantime, please consider letting yourself explore all the beautiful walking spots the area has to offer. In addition to our local and state parks, the Schuylkill River Trail has a number of stops in the area that are worth a look, and has an interactive map that can be set to find the trailhead closest to you. While you walk, consider all the beauty around you. Maybe you will spot a little animal in the woods, or hear a new birdsong in your neighborhood. Maybe you will look up, finding shapes in the clouds, or look down and see your own footprints on the ground. Whatever you find is an opportunity to celebrate the world around you, and recognize the beauty that you bring into it too. I hope you enjoy this spring season, and happy walking!!!

Swank, J. M., Walker, K. L. A., & Sang Min Shin. (2020). Indoor Nature-based Play Therapy: Taking the Natural World Inside the Playroom. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 29(3), 155–162. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pla0000123>

Udler, J. (2023). *Walk and Talk Therapy: A Clinician's Guide to Incorporating Movement and Nature into Your Practice*. PESI Publishing.

-Rachel Rubright