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(THE VIEW FROM THE COUCH)

Athens psychologist Dr. Angela Londoño-McConnell has seen an upsurge in patients stressed by lost jobs and the economy.

Are more people seeking out therapy to cope with the bad economy?

When people are under a great deal of stress, that has been linked over and over with heightened physical ailments and an increase in psychological concerns like depression. So it would make sense that if in the nation and in the world we're under a great deal of stress, we are going to see the

numbers [of people seeking therapy] go up.

What type of stress do you see from patients concerning their job situations?

They come in the office with either pending stress or the uncertainty of not knowing what's coming around the corner. All of us know someone who has job loss or financial stress. They've either seen it happen to them

or someone they know. In our society, when you meet someone new, the first question is, "What's your name?" and the second is, "What do you do?" Our job is very tied to our identity—not only identity but also financially, how we're able to provide for ourselves and our families.

What advice do you give people?

Identify what changes need to happen. Ask, "What do I need to do to make things better?" Then realize what is in your control and what is outside your control. Make one change at a time. If you try to make too many changes at a time, that will overwhelm you and make you feel like you're spinning out of control. Find out what you need to do to make those changes. Learn what resources are out there that can help you—a financial adviser, career counseling, therapy—whatever you need.

But if you've lost your job, isn't it hard to justify paying for a therapist?

When we are under a high amount of stress, so many aspects of our lives are affected by it. I think we cannot look at counseling as a luxury, and I find that a lot of people actually do not. When you find that you cannot get out of bed, you cannot go to work—if you are too depressed or too anxious—I do think it's a better investment than even the stock market at this point. Many people find that it's a necessity. —MJD

A Second Opinion

ADVICE FROM DR. WILLIAM DOVERSPIKE, A PSYCHOLOGIST WITH THE ATLANTA COUNSELING CENTER

- 1) Spend less time watching the evening news and more time working on improving your skills (writing, learning software, networking).
- 2) Accept what is and what can't be changed. Avoid wasting time and energy worrying about the past and future.
- 3) Muster the courage to try to change things; do things to focus on the present.