

Princeton Center for Eating Disorders

**25<sup>th</sup>** Anniversary  
1996 • 2021

*journeys*

From  
Science  
to ART

**Nurses Enhance  
Hope Curriculum**





Over the past year and a half, nurses at Penn Medicine Princeton Center for Eating Disorders have explored how they might play a key role in engendering hope among patients with eating disorders to potentially improve their quality of life. Their research led to the development of a four-week, evidence-based psychoeducation group centered on illuminating the pathways to hope.

The group has received a great deal of positive feedback from patients, and more recently nurses have sought to expand and complement the curriculum in creative ways.

“Our nurses have strong medical backgrounds, and in choosing the eating disorders field they are also inherently focused on empathy and hope,” says Nurse Manager Lauren Firman, MHA, BSN, RN, CNML. “They’ve been tapping into their creative minds to broaden the scope of this initiative and incorporate activities that resonate with patients. It’s been tremendous to be able to use all of those skills to provide truly holistic care, and it builds beautifully into the team approach we have on the unit.”

These creative projects facilitated by nurses serve as another tool to help patients express themselves and find meaning through that expression. They also are a visual reminder of the unique pathways to hope.

The evidence-based hope curriculum is designed to help patients explore the concept of hope, consider goal-setting as it relates to hope, create something tangible to illuminate individual pathways to these goals, and examine motivating factors that facilitate progress.

## Unmasking *the* Barriers to Hope

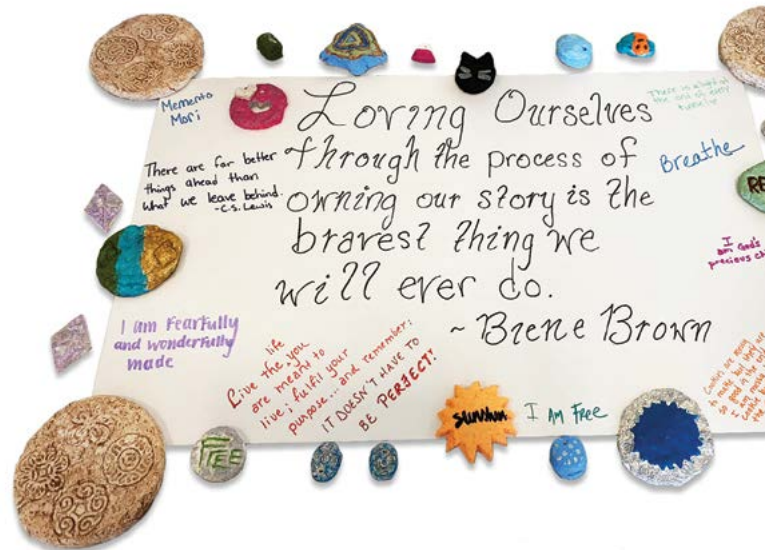
Often, the fear of failure or concern about the perceptions of others can keep people from moving forward and accomplishing their goals. To explore this form of self-doubt, Lisa Sabo, BSN, RN, PMHN-BC developed a hope curriculum project using paper mâché masks procured by Firman. Patients painted the exterior of the masks to illustrate how they think others see them, and they depicted who they believe they truly are on the inside of the masks.

“Incorporating projects like these into our discussions can make hope more tangible,” says Sabo. “The artwork is something patients can hold and take with them to reflect on how to move past barriers to their goals.”

## Creating *a* Personal Mantra

Nurses Danielle Jordan, RN, BSN, PMHN-BC, Amber Molineaux, RN, BSN, PMHN-BC, and Marissa Harris, RN, BSN, PMHN-BC recently coordinated a hope curriculum activity in which patients considered a symbol, word, or statement to serve as a reminder of hope during treatment and beyond. Patients then created salt dough tags that represented these mantras and had the opportunity to share the meaning behind their work with their peers.

“Through these activities, we remind patients that not all paths are linear and there is no perfect journey to recovery,” says Jordan. “Connecting with and owning what they’re going through can help them continue moving forward.”





## Hope *Can* Blossom

These artistic activities have also extended to adolescent patients. Jordan and Molineaux chose a lotus flower as inspiration for a recent group project focused on the pathways to hope. Despite growing in murky conditions, the lotus opens one petal at a time to blossom into a lovely flower.

Patients were each given one black and white section of the picture, which was separated into eight squares. Communicating and collaborating with their peers, they painted their individual squares while reflecting on their ability to blossom

even in the face of personal challenges. While each patient had a unique perspective in creating their portion of the flower, the pieces came together to recreate a complete picture in a striking way (see cover).

“The project helped patients understand that while flawed and different, we are all still beautiful,” says Molineaux. “The road to recovery may be rocky, but despite the bumps and curves, it can be a beautiful journey with the right support and motivation.”



“*Nurses* tend to have a special rapport with patients,” says Sabo. “Elevating our involvement in care beyond traditional roles can enhance the nurse-patient relationship and really drive engagement in a unique way.”

**Pictured on the cover (left-right):**  
Amber Molineaux, RN, BSN, PMHN-BC,  
Lisa Sabo, BSN, RN, PMHN-BC, and  
Danielle Jordan, RN, BSN, PMHN-BC.



## ROCK GARDEN Serves to Inspire Others

During the difficult and isolating months of the pandemic, a patient who was preparing for discharge from Princeton Center for Eating Disorders had the idea to leave a message of hope for future patients. Since that time, one painted rock has evolved into a garden of inspiration.

In coordination with Operations Management, Penn Medicine Princeton Medical Center’s landscaping company donated rocks, time, and resources to create

a garden in the outdoor courtyard area. When patients are near completion of their eating disorders treatment program, they select a rock, decorate it, and place it in this peaceful location for others to see.

“Patients look forward to this ritual—it reminds them to take pride in closing one door and opening another in their lives,” says Jennifer Campbell, LCSW, Senior Eating Disorders Therapist. “It’s meaningful for our patients to leave behind a message of hope for others.”



# Princeton Center for Eating Disorders Celebrates 25 Years

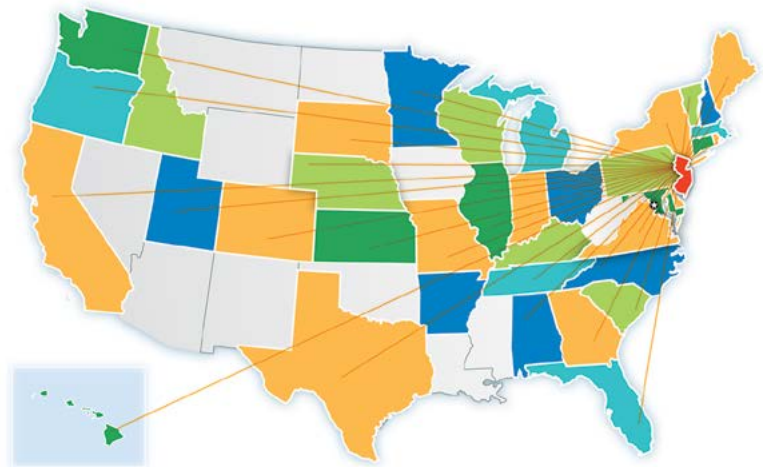
Penn Medicine Princeton Center for Eating Disorders is currently marking a significant milestone: 25 years of providing high-quality, compassionate care for those with eating disorders.

The vision for the center unfolded in the mid-1990s, when Richard Wohl, former President of Princeton House Behavioral Health, had a steady focus on the strategic growth of high-quality behavioral health programs—which went hand-in-hand with meeting the needs of the community. Working with the Chairman of Psychiatry, he laid the groundwork for the center by recruiting a psychiatrist specializing in eating disorders, who helped launch the program. With little space to expand at Princeton House, the Center for Eating Disorders Care began its work as a small, 12-bed inpatient unit at what was then The Medical Center at Princeton (now Princeton Medical Center) in 1996.

“We wanted to establish a level of quality unlike anywhere else in New Jersey,” says Wohl. “We expected seven to eight patients a day at first, and before long it was 10 to 12.”

As the hospital outgrew its space, it moved to a new home in Plainsboro in 2012. A needs assessment and strategic plan recommended that the center should be licensed for 22 inpatient beds, a prediction that now meets today’s patient needs. As part of a newly built medical center, the center was ideally equipped to treat the growing number of patients with medical complications of eating disorders and psychiatric comorbidities such as depression, OCD, and other mood disorders. At the same time, it was becoming a nationally known treatment center.

“We’ve seen patient acuity become higher over the years, but treatment interventions have expanded,” says Melinda Parisi Cummings, PhD, Assistant Professor in the Graduate Programs in Counseling Psychology at Holy Family University. Dr. Parisi Cummings joined Princeton Center for Eating Disorders as a therapist in 1997, served as its Director for 15 years, and presently serves as a consultant.



“There’s a greater focus on family involvement in treatment, gender inclusivity, professional development, integrated care, and flexibility within the context of evidence-based practice,” she adds. “The team helps to instill hope and holds hope for patients when they can’t yet see it for themselves.”

**Princeton Center for Eating Disorders now serves patients of all genders ages 8 and up with a strong focus on evidence-based care and the expertise to treat a wide range of co-occurring medical conditions as part of its academic medical center setting. In 2020, the center received patient referrals from 40 states across the U.S.**

“Our interdisciplinary team has an authentic passion for forward-thinking approaches to care that are also grounded in clinical research,” says Robbi Alexander, PhD, APN, PMHCNS-BC, present Director of Princeton Center for Eating Disorders. “We’re proud to offer this level of treatment for people across the country, and we’re planning to build even further on these initiatives as we look to the future.”

## Dr. Rebecca Boswell

# Joins the Team



**Rebecca Boswell, PhD** has joined the Princeton Center for Eating Disorders team as Supervising Psychologist. With extensive experience in eating disorders and neuroscience research paired with a strong clinical background in behavioral medicine, Dr. Boswell will supervise clinical staff, assist with program development, and help guide and expand various evidence-based initiatives through both internal and external collaboration.

"I'm excited to be part of an interdisciplinary team that is so welcoming, collaborative, and confident in its ability to provide strong care for patients with eating disorders and medical complications," says Dr. Boswell. "Our goal is not only to further invest in research, but also

to use that data to implement evidence-based findings that advance our clinical programming."

Dr. Boswell's philosophy of care is grounded in ways to help patients respect and protect the healthy part of self and use the freedoms gained in recovery to build a better quality of life. A published researcher and ad-hoc reviewer for more than a dozen journals, she has served in various clinical, research, and supervisory roles at the Yale Program for Obesity, Weight, and Eating Research at the Yale School of Medicine and the Lifespan Health System at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. Dr. Boswell earned her PhD and MS in clinical psychology at Yale University.

## Team Members Elected to AED Committees

Senior Eating Disorders Therapist **Jennifer Campbell, LCSW** has been elected as Co-Chair of the Residential and Inpatient Special Interest Group of the Academy for Eating Disorders. During her three-year term, she will work with professional colleagues to provide opportunities for providers around the world to seek counsel on special cases, support for organizational needs, and insight on the management of pandemic-related issues. Campbell will also serve as a committee member of the Special Interest Group Oversight Committee, which oversees the efforts and strategies of special AED groups ranging from trauma to DBT and suicide.

In addition, Supervising Psychologist **Rebecca Boswell, PhD** has been elected to the AED's Medical Care Standards Committee. As part of this role, she will collaborate with international experts on best practices in medical care for those with eating disorders and help to ensure that care guidelines are up to date.

## Staff Share Knowledge Virtually and In Person



In recent months, Princeton Center for Eating Disorders team members provided the following presentations for professionals and students:



Senior Eating Disorders Therapist **Jennifer Campbell, LCSW** (above left) and Lead Dietitian **Jenna Deinzer, RDN** (above right) provided virtual education on eating disorders for high school science students at the Hun School of Princeton.



Director **Robbi Alexander, PhD, APN, PMHCNS-BC** provided a three-hour virtual presentation to nurse practitioners in the Women's Health/Gender-Related Nurse Practitioner Track at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing. Topics included DSM criteria and manifestation of different eating disorders, medical complications, and reframing avoidance and resistance to help women access treatment.



Dr. Alexander also presented virtually to students at the Merion Mercy Academy in Philadelphia as part of a health promotion and outreach project they were undertaking. Dr. Alexander helped them understand the common drivers and perpetuating factors for eating disorders, with a focus on a healthier self-view.



Senior Therapist **Maggie Moran, LCSW** facilitated a discussion with a group of therapists and APRNs at Alapocas Collaborative Care in Wilmington, DE to help them explore best practices for clients with comorbid disordered eating.



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# SCHOOL'S **in** SESSION!

## An Academics Program that Excels

**W**ith more than 120 years of collective teaching experience, the academics team at Princeton Center for Eating Disorders is ready for anything that comes their way. Sometimes that means quickly reading a novel one of their students has been assigned by their school—or for science teacher Janet Cohen, taking a physics refresher on her own time to create an alternate lesson plan that would better help a struggling student.

“Because we work with children and teens ages 8 to 18, we need to be ready for all subjects across various grade levels,” says Cohen. “At the same time, they’re dealing with difficult issues in their lives and may have less ability to focus. We build in flexibility and try to alleviate stress while facilitating one-on-one learning.”

The academics team—which also includes Academics Coordinator Barbara Moses and teachers Celeste Gray and Julie Sattler-Scatena—provides individualized instruction at least two hours a day in subjects ranging from science, math, and history to English, Spanish,



French, and Italian. They connect with teachers and guidance counselors behind the scenes to ensure continuity and manage expectations.

“We’re pretty unique in having four certified teachers with such specialized knowledge,” explains Moses. “We can adapt to what’s happening in the school or a particular teaching style while controlling the timeline so patients can focus more fully on their health.”

Even throughout the pandemic when virtual and hybrid learning was common, the teachers safely provided in-person instruction in a special classroom on the unit. At discharge, they contact step-down care coordinators to help patients maintain academic progress.



“I’m proud to go to work and be a member of this team,” adds Cohen. “When a concept clicks with a student, it’s wonderful to see. I remember the teachers who made a difference in my life, and I hope these patients count me among theirs, too.”