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"They are very aware of our culture, more so than Americans are aware of theirs," he said. Being a member of IVC Detroit — and hosting dinners — fosters a broader personal perspective, Ngai emphasized. "I think we do make a difference.... When we talk with our own family and friends we can say this is what's really going on." Americans often perceive their culture as being at the forefront of social development, said Czubiak. Sometimes, that's a misperception. One year, she and Tom hosted a group of women from South America. The group was active in furthering women's issues in their own countries. "We think we're ahead of everybody, and it's not true," said Czubiak.

History lessons

Sheryl Kammer of Bloomfield Hills loves to travel and learn about new cultures. Her husband, Rick, is a stay-at-home kind of guy, so Kammer often travels abroad with other groups or by herself. When she's home, Kammer enjoys being an IVC Detroit host.

"If I can't get there, then the next best thing is meeting someone from there," she said. Last year, Kammer hosted two Russians as overnight guests for three weeks. Fortunately for this big-hearted hostess, the Russians had a busy agenda and were gone from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Kammer's hospitality never ran out — she made her guests tons of apple fritters and pancakes for breakfast — but she no longer hosts overnight stays.

"Now I just do dinners," she said. "But I'd have to say my husband got some good meals out of that visit."

Goodwill: IVC Detroit member Sheryl Kammer (second from right) enjoys some camaraderie with her guests from Moldova: From left, Gheorghe, Nicolae, Alexie and Ilie. Photo taken in 1998.



From Africa, with love: IVC Detroit host Sandra Richardson Smith (third from left) with dinner guests from Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Senegal, Madagascar and Togo.

Kammer once entertained a man from Moldova who was in line to become the country's next president. The man, who Kammer described as being "the largest human being I have ever seen," told her he had twice been the target of two assassinations. "I said you've been the target of assassinations and you're in my living room!"

At times guests provide their hosts with reality checks. The Czubiaks once drove their van full of guests — all considered minorities in this country — through a Detroit suburb to see the ice flows on the Detroit River. When they stopped to take pictures, they encountered unwelcomed stares.

Kammer learned from a group of 22 African women that 60 percent of the population in their various countries was women. The reason? The ongoing tribal war between the Tutsis and the Hutus resulted in the genocide of millions, mostly men and children.

Window to the world

Jonathan Swift of Bloomfield Hills is director of International Studies at Madonna University in Livonia. He also hosts two Bloomfield cable programs on Channel 56, *Dining Out* and *Global Connections*. In addition, he is a board member of the International Visitors Council of Metropolitan Detroit.

"It gives you a window in the world. Not only a window, but a door you walk through," he said about the cultural and educational benefits of belonging to the IVC Detroit.

As a former teacher in the Livonia School District, Swift introduced the popular Global Education program based at Stevenson High School. He once arranged for 10 Russian educators to tour the school.

"They felt that maybe their students were better behaved," he said. "But they were in awe of the facilities and were surprised the school sponsored student musicals and plays."

Two of Swift's Russian guests brought video cassettes and asked if they could film his home, room by room. "Even the bathroom. They said you have so much space...oh, look at this, look at that."

When asked if IVC Detroit visitors ever change their perceptions of the United States, Swift said the results are two-fold: "First, they act as interns in various businesses (referring to the Community Connection Program). Essentially that is what the government grant is for. Second and just as valuable is the people-to-people experience."

"They're given the opportunity to meet Americans in their homes."



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more in public than at home. Thus, agoraphobia or the fear of venturing out into the environment, results in many panic-prone individuals becoming homebound in an attempt to avoid further attacks.

Treatment options

There are several treatment options to consider. Psychodynamic psychotherapy helps an individual uncover deep seated conflicts which find their expression in the form of symptoms of panic attacks, in particular, and anxiety disorders in general.

Cognitive therapy helps an individual modify their beliefs about their sensations of panic. For example, instead of reacting to physical symptoms with beliefs such as "I can't stand this, I must be having a heart attack, I need emergency help," the individual is taught to think in terms of "These physical symptoms are unpleasant but not harmful, I can tolerate them until they pass. They are a signal for me to relax and avoid stress."

Behavioral treatment can include educational training in deep muscle relaxation and abdominal breathing exercises as an antidote for the overactive nervous system. Through exposure therapy, people repeatedly place themselves in situations that provoke anxiety and panic and may conquer their fears.

Medication therapies are more plentiful than ever before and good results are being seen. For short-term treatments, well known tranquilizers such as Valium and Xanax can provide quick relief from the physical

and some of the psychological symptoms.

A different class of medications, namely antidepressants, such as Tofranil, Elavil and Norpramine, have been found to be successful in longer-term treatment. More recently, newer pharmaceutical tools such as Zoloft, Paxil, Effexor and Prozac have been shown to be quite effective in the longer term management of these disorders. These medications can work alone or in combination by effecting different areas of brain chemistry which often overlap.

From clinical findings and research about anxiety disorders and panic attacks, we are finding that combinations of treatments often produce very favorable results. Commonly, a non-medical psychotherapist will work with a panic sufferer from the psychodynamic, cognitive and behavioral standpoint in conjunction with a medical practitioner who will use a trial of medications.

Understanding your disorder and getting appropriate professional help can put panic into perspective.

Find out more about anxiety disorders through: Anxiety Disorders Association of America at www.adaa.org or the Internet. Or read *Fuel the Fear and Do It Anyway* by Susan Jeffers and *Don't Panic, Taking Control of Anxiety Attacks* by R. Reid Wilson.

The Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute in Farmington Hills, (248) 861-3380 and The Michigan Psychological Association Referral Source at (617) 347-1885 can offer information and referrals.

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