

**AUSTIN**  
**BUSINESS JOURNAL**



**Jan Ford Mustin, Ph.D.**  
*Clinical Psychologist*

# Psychologist takes some chances in her practice

**BY ROB CURRAN**

**SPECIAL TO THE AUSTIN BUSINESS JOURNAL**

A young boy with Tourette's syndrome twitched so badly that the other children in his elementary school either avoided him or laughed. One day, a gentle psychologist fixed electrodes to the boy's head and showed him how to control shapes and colors on a screen - without moving his hands. After two and a half weeks of training, the muscle spasms stopped and the boy was laughing with his schoolyard friends.

Austin psychologist Jan Ford Mustin knows some of her colleagues question her tools, just as they pooh-pooh her radio work and televised talks. But she has beaten too many ticks and tragedies to worry about that.

"She has been willing to stand up to the establishment and say, 'There are other ways of helping people,'" says Cindy Morphew, vice president for environmental affairs at the Texas Oil and Gas Association, who nominated Mustin as a Health Care Hero. "She was willing to take chances and step out and be a leader."

Most clinical psychologists attach themselves to one school of practice or another. Mustin believes she can best serve her clients through constant study and diversification. She offers a range of "peak performance" services, including techniques borrowed from neuroscience.

The color scheme in Mustin's main office on Bee Caves Road matches her dark eyes and beige teddy bears. A family of bears sit on the ledge above the psychologist's desk. The wall behind the client's couch is almost obscured by certificates for every conceivable type of counseling and therapy.

On the couch, Mustin once hypnotized a woman and helped her relive the death of her sister. On the twin chairs beside it, many marriages returned from the brink. "I had a whole family present what looked initially like a marriage crisis," Mustin says. "From evaluation, it became clear there was a substance abuse component." Mustin used a variety of talk therapy and counseling techniques to save both the marriage and the traumatized children in that case.

"Perhaps more than anyone I know, she is open to evolving her practice," says Stephanie Carter, a clinical psychologist in San Antonio who started out as Mustin's office manager. "She inspired me to go back to graduate school and train," Carter says.

Mustin's father worked as an Air Force officer. She rose to the top of many different schools. "You overcompensate, you overachieve to make friends and to fit in," she says. As she moved around the world, Mustin looked up from her books. "It was really neat to be able to build your own ice rink in your backyard just by turning on a garden hose," she says of her years in Alaska.

At the University of Arkansas, the dean, academic groups and sorority sisters hung laurels on her name.

In her public speaking appearances, Mustin has quoted an angst poem she wrote at this time about a "fool whose hymns are heresy." This love of poetry drew her to New York and then Madrid, Spain, where she studied literature.

When she started women's consciousness groups in Spain, she found her inner psychologist. "For the first time, I heard people talking about their real lives," she says.

She returned to the United States and entered the University of Texas. Her talk therapy practice in Austin took off. When she married business consultant Al Mustin nearly 20 years ago, she occupied 6,000 square feet at the Austin Centre in the Central Business District. She started her radio commentary gig, which continues today. Then an unfortunate sequence of failed surgeries rendered Al Mustin legally blind within a year of the marriage.

Her friend's philosophical reaction inspired Cindy Morphew. "She was able to see that as a bridge to better things," Morphew says. "She continued to care for others while she took care of herself and her husband."

For Mustin, her husband's misfortune redirected her life as she questioned traditional psychotherapy. She involved herself in the treatment center where her husband recovered. After more research and study, she began counseling others on the subject of recovery.

"Jan Mustin is willing to step up and say, 'I will try this, I'll step out and learn to do this for you,' her husband says. "Others, sometimes her colleagues and medical doctors, would be very critical and say, 'I'm not sure she knows what she's doing over there.'"

In 1995, Mustin became the only psychologist in Austin to use brainwaves in diagnoses and treatment. With her daring, she helped hundreds of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder kick Ritalin. During a first appointment, a child or adult with this condition visits a diagnostic lab. In the lab, there are two computers and a few posters of seas, trees and precipices with words like "Visualize" on them. In one corner, there is a steel box with dials on it, like something from a radio studio. Mustin or another staff psychologist places a cap on the client's head. A cable connects the hat to the box. The machine composes color-coded maps of the client's brainwave activity.

Four other labs house the sensors and computers, which allow clients to exercise their brainwaves. The client learns how to manipulate sounds and visuals by adjusting the brain-wave patterns. Newly trained brainwaves should improve the client's attention span.

Morphew's daughter was one of the first neurotherapy clients. "It has lasting, quantifiable benefits," Morphew says. "When she was a preteen, after investing an hour and a half after school three days a week, she would say, 'This is good, I'm glad I did it.' I think that speaks volumes."

About 60 percent of her practice now involves some work with the sensors and computers. This kind of treatment doesn't come cheap. But Mustin makes concessions - a woman who recently brought in a child was charged one-fifth of the proper fee.

"She has been able to help people who haven't been able to get help elsewhere," Al Mustin says. Consequently, she is popular in the health care field.

"She really is a superb psychologist," says Susan White, an Austin clinical psychologist. "Every time I see her, she's been to another conference. She's just continuing to add to her training." White refers clients to Mustin when symptoms make it unclear whether the person suffers from mood disorders or brain damage. Mustin welcomes the role of last resort.

Mustin recently published a book, her own blend of memoir and "Chicken Soup for the Soul." When she isn't doing clinical work, she teams up with her husband at Mustin & Associates, an executive coaching firm that counts professional golfers and Olympians on its books. She still does inspirational talks for television, companies and even Eanes Elementary School, which is where Morphew first heard her.

"All the qualities she encourages others to live by," Morphew says, "she lives them."

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Austin Business Journal, May 16-22, 2003