



Psychology from the Georgia School of Professional Psychology.

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In my private practice as a Clinical Psychologist, I provide individual therapy for children, and adolescents ranging in ages from 5- 17 years of age. I was previously the Clinical Director at City Side Healthcare, a Psychologist at Medlin Treatment Center, a Psychologist at Clayton County Community Mental Heal Center, and a clinician at Alpha Care Mental Health Associates and Devereux Georgia Treatment Network.

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My focus areas of expertise include attachment difficulties, trauma, children/adolescents placed into foster care, anxiety, depression, psychological testing, as well as adolescents involved in the legal system displaying severe emotional and behavioral problems.

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I have served as an expert and fact witness in the following juvenile and family courts: Henry, Clayton, Fulton, Cobb, and Cherokee Counties. I have also testified as an expert witness in criminal court in Cherokee County.

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Since early 2020 and the beginning of COVID a drastic change has occurred in the mental health of our children. In my practice and the larger community, the number of cases of children with the following conditions has increased: depression, anxiety, eating disorders, self-injurious behaviors, suicide attempts, drug use, alcohol abuse, physical/sexual/emotional abuse and neglect.

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I have had clients who have worked extremely hard at overcoming their social anxiety.

However, the mask mandates have negatively reinforced the notion that the world is not safe. And because of this, these clients have regressed and will not take off their masks because they feel that danger is everywhere.

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Before the mask mandates, many teachers were able to identify my clients who were having a tough time through nonverbal signals and communication, as some of my clients come from abusive and neglectful homes. However, with masks, these nonverbal communications and signals are not readily apparent. The opportunity of the teachers to see and react to these nonverbal clues has been taken away by the mask.

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One of my clients had developed self-harming behavior prior to COVID, that was exacerbated by the continued use of the mask. This client has trichotillomania (hair pulling). The hair pulling had become very noticeable but when masks were mandated the client switched to picking at her face and the skin on her lips. She can hide this emotionally and physically harmful behavior behind her mask which prevents others from offering help, as they cannot see the effects of her condition.

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I additionally have clients who avoid going to school at all, just so they do not have to wear the mask. Some clients go as far as skipping school all together.

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I have claustrophobic clients who have panic attacks when they have the masks on, as the mask simulates closed spaces that cause them so much distress. They feel like they cannot catch their breath and begin panicking.

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I hear a lot about children being resilient during this pandemic, but the children I treat are dealing with real trauma as a result of COVID and the lockdowns. Yes, children are resilient, but only to a certain point. A part of our society has forgotten to account for the unintended consequences of the shutdowns and mask for school-age children. Rather society is focused solely on physical health aspects rather than the full health of the child including mental health.

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Not only do the masks lose efficacy over such a long period, but the negative effects on the kids are also exacerbated.

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It is my professional opinion that masks are damaging to our children's psychological, behavioral and social-emotional health.

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Nonverbal communication plays a significant role in our lives, as it can improve a person's ability to relate, engage, and establish meaningful interactions in everyday lives.

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Research has shown over and over that nonverbal cues contribute to healthy attachments, teaches children how to regulate their own emotions, trust others and build healthy relationships. Nonverbal communication and cues promote security by helping children feel cared for and understood, they help children feel safe enough to explore and learn about their world.

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Covering a child's face mutes these nonverbal forms of communication and can result in

robotic and emotionless interactions, anxiety, depression as well as a plethora of other mental health issues.

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We have lost the extremely critical form of non-verbal communication and cues, by the masking of children for 8 plus hours a day while in school.

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We must focus on the mental health of our children and adolescents because if we do not, we will have an epidemic of mental health issues within the child and adolescent population.

**FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NOT.**

  
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ASHLEY LOYD

SUBSCRIBED TO AND SWORN BEFORE ME  
ON THIS 15 DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2021 IN THE  
PRESENCE OF:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
NOTARY PUBLIC

MY COMMISSION EXPIRES:

July 24, 2022

