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### **At GWU, Alumna Developed Writing and Interviewing Talents She Now Uses as a Counselor**

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# At GWU, Alumna Developed Writing and Interviewing Talents She Now Uses as a Counselor

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Office of University  
Communications

April 13, 2020

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## ***Roberta Borden Wilson, '87, Specializes in Trauma Therapy***

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After graduating from Gardner-Webb University in 1987, Roberta Borden Wilson spent the next 15 years working as a journalist. She also taught journalism at GWU for two years and later left newspapers to become a high school English teacher. During her 14 years as a teacher, Wilson began the transition to a career that had interested her when she was younger.

“When I was in high school, I wanted to be a psychologist because I was intrigued by people’s behavior, particularly some of my more colorful relatives,” she reflected. “But, during my senior year, I had a teacher who encouraged me to write. I discovered I was good at it. When I arrived at Gardner-Webb, I was passionate about being a journalist and really never gave psychology another thought. At GWU, I worked as an

assistant to Dr. Jim Taylor, who was an English professor and a mentor. Dr. Taylor and Dr. Joyce Brown (professor emerita of English) encouraged my love of literature and poetry and were not willing to allow me to slip into the communication studies major without a fight. By virtue of that, I added the degree in English and inadvertently became an English teacher.”

Wilson obtained her master’s in clinical mental health counseling from Regent University in 2017. She believes that God used her past experiences to prepare her to be a psychotherapist, specializing in trauma counseling. “During my years as a journalist and as a teacher, I encountered lots of trauma and saw how that impacted people,” she related. “I find that my experiences as a journalist and teacher have helped me as a psychotherapist, because I write a lot, listen to people’s life stories and help teach them how to have a better life and healthier relationships. My previous careers also made me emotionally strong, which enables me to listen, but not become overwhelmed by painful narratives.”



In response to the stress everyone is facing during stay-at-home restrictions because of the Coronavirus pandemic, Wilson offers daily mental health tips on the Facebook page for her practice, Grace Christian Counseling. She has offices in Charlotte, Belmont and Lincolnton, North Carolina. “At heart, I care deeply about people and don’t like to see them suffer, especially if I have information that can help them feel better,” said Wilson. “It’s my ministry. Transitions, under the best of circumstances, are hard. People’s lives have been turned upside down by COVID-19. Stay-at-home-orders, work changes or loss, home schooling kids, being around family members all day, etc., are incredibly stressful, and I want to offer them sound psychological advice to help them cope.”

Wilson shares her top five mental health tips:

- Do for others, but also take care of yourself. If you are not taking some time for yourself daily—at least 15 to 30 minutes—to exercise, meditate, do something you enjoy or to just rest, you are going to become irritable, resentful and stressed out. Remember: an empty pitcher never quenched anyone’s thirst.
- If you are alone all day, reach out to others. If you are with others, make some time to be alone. Too much of anything is not typically a good thing. Balance is key.
  - If you live alone and are working or observing stay-at-home recommendations, reach out to others. Attend church and Bible study online. Create or join an online book club. Facetime or Zoom with friends. Never—NEVER—let a day go by without talking to someone other than a work colleague.
  - If you are at home almost all the time with others, set aside a time and place every day to be alone. Even if it is just for 10 minutes. Take a shower, go for a walk, sit in your closet, get up before everyone else and enjoy a solitary cup of coffee. Being alone helps you consider your thoughts, emotions and needs.
- Limit screen time. Endless hours of cable news or video games or even texting aren’t healthy for anyone. Turn off the TV, get off the computer, and put down the phone. Scheduling time to enjoy these pursuits is fine, but endless exposure to negative news reports or social media posts can be exhausting and disheartening.
- Get outside. Sunlight boosts positive brain chemistry, wards off depression and helps strengthen your immune system. Spend at least 10 minutes outside every day.
- Give yourself permission to feel. That means let yourself laugh and cry and everything in between. Emotional expression is normal and healthy. Suppressing sadness is unhealthy and will eventually come out in unexpected and unpleasant ways potentially as anger or depression. Keeping a journal enables us to externalize feelings and thoughts, facilitates emotional regulation and helps us from feeling overwhelmed. Specifically, a gratitude journal helps us focus on the positives in life.



Find more tips on Wilson's Facebook page, "[Grace Christian Counseling](#)." Her website is [gracecounselingcharlotte.com](http://gracecounselingcharlotte.com). She can also be reached at [Roberta.gracecc@gmail.com](mailto:Roberta.gracecc@gmail.com) or 704-748-3585.

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