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Reel Culture, Cybersupervision, Marketing Toolbox and much, much more!
TILT - THERAPEUTIC INNOVATIONS IN LIGHT OF TECHNOLOGY

TILT is the magazine of the Online Therapy Institute, a free publication published four times a year online at www.onlinetherapymagazine.com.

ISSN 2156-5619
VOLUME 3, ISSUE 4, SUMMER 2013

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WRITER’S GUIDELINES
If you have information or an idea for one of our regular columns, please email editor@onlinetherapymagazine.com with the name of the column in the subject line (e.g. Reel Culture).

If you are interested in submitting an article for publication please visit our writer’s guidelines at www.onlinetherapymagazine.com.

TILT is about envisioning therapeutic interventions in a new way. While Kate was visiting DeeAnna on the Jersey Shore, they took a late afternoon boat ride and a display of sail boats tilting against the sunset came within view. It reminded them how, as helping professionals, we should always be willing to tilt our heads a bit to be able to envision which innovations – however seemingly unconventional – may fit our clients’ needs.

Our clients are experiencing issues in new ways in light of the presence of technology in their lives. As helping professionals, so are we. TILT and the Online Therapy Institute is about embracing the changes technology brings to the profession, keeping you informed and aware of those developments, and entertaining you along the way.
The Benefits of Therapeutic Writing

The Benefits of Blogging For Better Student Writing

What's Your Coaching Strategy?
A Note from the Managing Editors…

Welcome, or welcome back, to TILT – Therapeutic Innovations in Light of Technology, and the fourth issue of Volume 3.

This is a special issue for us, with some great news about developments in our academic world in offering the new MSc in Cyberculture! Offered by Metanoia Institute and subject to validation by Middlesex University, London UK, the online Master’s degree offers ten concentration topics which are part of our Certified Cyber Facilitator (CCF) credential, forming the entry point to this new exciting academic award. See our Institute News section for more information!

Also in our Institute News section is more about how you can help support TILT Magazine with our new Pay What You Want model! With subscriptions ranging from $5 to $500, every dollar, pound, euro or yen goes towards maintaining the consistent high quality of TILT and gives you the chance to be part of our mission to produce the magazine each quarter! We will continue to offer the magazine for free of course - our reasons for producing TILT have not changed. One bit. TILT is our pride and joy – we want to offer a quality, easy-to-access magazine for the helping professions and we do! To honour this event, we have given the magazine a facelift in celebration of five years of the Online Therapy Institute and three years of TILT Magazine!

In this issue, we have three special features for you, centred around a theme of Therapeutic Writing.

We were proud to interview Kathleen Adams, the renowned owner of the Center for Journal Therapy. Kathleen talks us through her passion for journaling, the benefits of it, and the influence of James Pennebaker’s work. The Center is publishing Pennebaker’s new book, which you can read more about in our Love of Books section.

Kim Ades discusses journaling from the Coaching perspective, and how her platform JournalEngine™ helps coaches keep clients focused and invested in the process, and also provides invaluable insights “that enable me to dig in and really identify the core beliefs that both help and hinder my clients”.

Jessica Scott-Reid reviews the benefits of blogging for students, and asks does blogging help to facilitate better student writing? The answer is a resounding “yes”, but particularly when accompanied by explicit guidelines regarding writing and commenting.

Our aim continues, issue by issue, to keep you up-to-date with developments in innovations in service delivery. In particular, the Cyberstreet is about what is new and noteworthy at the Institutes as well as with our new graduates, supporters and partners.

All our other regular columnists are here, with useful and entertaining comment on research; marketing; legalities, film, innovations and CyberSupervision. In particular this month, we welcome the experiences of Ran Zlica from the Institute of Life Coach Training, about his work as both a coach and a coach trainer.

And of course there is a good dose of humour from our resident cartoonist, Christine Korol. We hope you enjoy this issue, whatever professional world you inhabit. 😊

Kate and DeeAnna

Managing Editors
MSc in Cyberculture

Hold on to your hats—your graduation caps to be exact!

We have changed things up a bit...

We now offer a Certified Cyber Facilitator (CCF) Credential (choosing 1 of the 10 Specialist Certificates as your focus). Our CCF credential forms the entry criteria to a second year of study toward a Master’s degree with Metanoia Institute, subject to validation by Middlesex University.

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Be sure to sign up for details about the MSc in Cyberculture. We send out emails as details emerge:

http://onlinetherapyinstitute.com/earn-masters-degree/
MORE TRAINING NEWS!

Our Certified Professional Coach Training is increasingly popular so if you are looking to become a credentialed coach, we offer an online program and live workshops that qualify toward the Board Certified Coach Credential as well. Here’s where to find out more:

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Where are we facilitating workshops live?

Check out our Upcoming Events!

http://onlinetherapyinstitute.com/events/

DeeAnna is facilitating a number of live workshops from small group intensives to full Distance Credentialed Counselor (DCC) trainings. Be sure to check out her full training schedule here:

http://www.mentalhealthonthewebblog.com/workshops-training/

IN OTHER INSTITUTE NEWS...

In the spring, DeeAnna attended a workshop facilitated by Kathleen Adams: Journal Therapy: Writing as a Therapeutic Tool which inspired the feature article this issue, interviewing Kay about therapeutic writing.

Kate had her first article published as part of her role as regular Columnist for the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's Workplace Division. The Division and BACP have kindly allowed us to share the column, which you can read here: http://onlinetherapyinstitute.com/2013/07/counselling-work/

In June, Kate was delighted to attend Erik van der Elst’s workshop on Creative Systemic Practice in a Digital World: Talking about the Relationship between Young People and the Internet, offered by the Manchester Association for Family Therapy. Erik’s work will inform our Children and Young People CCF, and it was also great to meet one of our trainees there!
Kate is now well into her work as a member of the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board, with her expert reference in particular being around online Social Gaming and links with potential future problem attitudes and behaviour with regard to gambling.

Kate gave a talk on Online Coaching for the BACP’s Coaching Division for their Oxford Networking Group in June, a vibrant and useful discussion was had by all post-presentation!

**STAY TUNED!** LoriAnn Stretch has joined Kate and DeeAnna in editing a new textbook: *The Use of Technology in Clinical Supervision and Training: Mental Health Applications* to be published late 2013/ early 2014 by Charles C. Thomas Publishers.

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Find out all the ways to join our community by checking out our community page!

Our Linkedin group is growing with 2500 members!

That writing is in itself therapeutic is not in any way a new idea. Numerous studies have pointed to both psychological and physical benefits to be gained from emotionally expressive writing (Frattaroli, 2006). Freud’s analyses included working by exchanges of letters, the technology of his time, and in the modern age email is hailed as the “inevitable future of therapeutic letters” (Moules, 2009, p. 109).

As Bolton (2011, p. 19) notes in her excellent guide to therapeutic writing in practice, studies have supported written expression as a means of alleviating stress and anxiety (Anderson and MacCurdy, 2000), of improving mood, well-being and understanding of oneself (Burton and King, 2004, Staricoff, 2004; White, 2004) better control of actions and enhanced awareness of personal meaning and connection with others (Hilse et al., 2007) among other benefits.

Exactly how the benefits of writing come about is a matter of debate (e.g. Sloan and Marx, 2004; Pennebaker, 1993; 2004; Lepore et al, 2002), and some research findings have certainly been mixed (e.g. Earnhardt, 2002). Nonetheless, the consensus continues to grow that significant benefits are to be had. This column touches on just some of the many items on the topic, much of which has been influenced, often directly, by the seminal work of Pennebaker (1997) and his colleagues (e.g. Pennebaker and Chung, 2007). Readers interested in what might be revealed through study of their own writing, or that of their clients, may find Pennebaker’s online text analysis tool of particular value.

Johnston et al (2010) explored the effects of a writing task intended to reduce emotional avoidance on 80 people with bulimia. Against their expectations, the findings suggested that bulimic symptoms were reduced whether a task was specifically designed to be therapeutic, or was simply a relatively superficial, factual writing task (like describing the view from your window) which had been intended as a
non-active ‘control condition’. While as many people in the study did not improve as did, the findings also suggested that where decreased symptomology did occur it was associated with better regulation of mood and a reduction in negative beliefs about emotions. A significant finding for readers of this journal was that participants distinctly preferred internet delivery of the task to face to face discussion.

An earlier study by Robinson and Serfaty (2008) offered a full randomised controlled trial of email therapy for eating disorders and found that email administered therapy and self-directed writing were both clearly more beneficial than a waiting-list control condition. This strongly suggests that it was the act of writing itself that leads to improvements. The implied possibility that interaction with a therapist may be more a matter of preference than it is about achieving best outcomes was also partially answered in this study, which found greater improvement among those who received active email therapy (in some analyses) and concluded that email therapy can be used to treat bulimia effectively.

Written expression has also long been supported by studies that appear to demonstrate benefits not only for those with a range of psychological conditions and stress (e.g. Lumley and Provenzano, 2003), but also physical health conditions too. Among them are fibromyalgia (Broderick et al., 2005) which is particularly affected by psychosocial factors, adjustment to life after a heart attack (Willmott, 2011), breast cancer (Stanton et al., 2002), prostate cancer (Rosenberg et al., 2002) and other forms of the disease (Bolton, 2008), rheumatoid arthritis (Broderick et al., 2004) and asthma (Smyth et al., 1999) as well as improvements in symptoms and frequency of clinic visits, including among frequent attenders (Esterling, 1999; Gidron et al., 2002; Burton and King, 2004).

Stuckey and Nobel’s (2010) review of research noted that “dozens of replications of these types of studies have demonstrated that emotional writing can influence … immune function, stress hormones, blood pressure, and a number of social, academic, and cognitive variables. These effects have been shown to hold across cultures, age groups, and diverse samples ” (p. 259).

Some, mostly older, studies that have suggested variable results and a need for detailed understanding of just when and how written expression can be made to be most effective (e.g. Walker et al., 1999; McArdle and Byrt, 2001; Norman et al., 2004) suggesting that while many people can benefit from writing about how they feel, and it need not always be guided by a therapist, it is important to pay attention to the ways in which its benefits can be fully utilised.
REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This article was written with the assistance of Claire Williamson, M.A., Programme Leader of the MSc in Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes at the Metanoia Institute in London and Bristol, UK. For further details about this course, write to mandy.kersey@metanoia.ac.uk, or telephone (UK) (+ 44) 0208832 3073.

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Please send reports of research studies, planned, in progress or completed, to the TILT Editor at editor@onlinetherapymagazine.com
The Use of Technology in Mental Health

Applications, Ethics and Practice

Edited by

Kate Anthony, MSc, FBACP
Online Therapy Institute

DeeAnna Merz Nagel, LPC, DCC
Online Therapy Institute

Stephen Goss, Ph.D., MBACP
Independent Consultant in Counselling, Research, Supervision and Technology in Mental Health

Technology is revolutionizing the delivery of mental health services. In this book, the reader is introduced to the broadest possible sampling of technologies used by mental health professionals today. It contains 30 chapters on different aspects of technological innovation in mental health care from 43 expert contributors from all over the globe, appropriate for a subject that holds such promise for a worldwide clientele and that applies to professionals in every country.

A wide range of styles is offered, from the individual practitioner exploring a new technology and writing anecdotally about their personal experience, to some of the world’s most experienced practitioners writing a thorough overview of a technology and its uses in the profession.

In each chapter, you will find introductions to the technology and discussion of its application to the therapeutic intervention being discussed, in each case brought to life through vivid case material that shows its use in practice. Each chapter also contains an examination of the ethical implications — and cautions — of the possibilities these technologies offer, now and in the future. Technological terms are explained in each chapter for those not already familiar with the field, while the content should stimulate even the most seasoned and technologically minded practitioner.

Psychotherapists, counsellors, psychiatrists, life coaches, social workers, nurses — in fact, every professional in the field of mental health care — can make use of the exciting opportunities technology presents. Whether you have been a therapist for a long time, are a student or are simply new to the field, The Use of Technology in Mental Health will be an important tool for better understanding the psychological struggles of your clients and the impact that technology will have on your practice.

Further information on ethics, training and practical exploration of online therapy can be found at: www.onlinetherapyinstitute.com, whose work extends and deepens the resources made available in this volume.

Order Online at:

www.ccthomas.com
The Benefits of Therapeutic Writing

Kathleen Adams & DeeAnna Nagel
Kathleen Adams LPC, is a clinical journal therapist and the founder/director of the Center for Journal Therapy (www.journaltherapy.com) and its professional training division, the fully online Therapeutic Writing Institute (www.TWInstitute.net). She is the author/editor of nine books on journal therapy, including the best-selling Journal to the Self and Expressive Writing: Foundations of Practice, due out in July 2013. She has been a tireless spokesperson for the power of writing for healing, change and growth for nearly 30 years and is known as a pragmatic visionary in her approaches to writing as a therapeutic tool. In an internet survey she was listed, along with Anais Nin and Anne Frank, as one of the three most influential journal writers of the 20th century.

Although familiar with her work, I only recently met Kathleen when I attended a workshop she conducted this past spring in New Jersey. As an online therapist, I have used the written word as a therapeutic tool for nearly 15 years. The topic of therapeutic writing fits both within the process of journal writing and in the use of written
interventions such as email/discussion forums and Internet Relay Chat.

As you read through, begin to conceptualize applying journal writing methodology to online therapy and coaching. And then, hold that thought! We will be continuing this interview in a further issue of TILT, focusing down on the use of technology and the application of therapeutic writing within cyberspace!

Q: Why do people write journals?

KA: Journal writing is one of the most reliable and effective ways we have to stay in touch with whatever’s going on in the present moment. The journal creates a bridge between the past and the future. It helps clarify angst, objectify drama and heal trauma. And it helps us know and remember who we are, so we can celebrate the everyday joys and successes as well as the major achievements of our lives.

Q: Has there been research on the benefits of journaling?

KA: Absolutely! Dr. James Pennebaker, a research psychologist and chair of the psychology department at the University of Texas in Austin, has done landmark work correlating writing with both emotional and physiological healing for the past 30 years. In a nutshell, the research model is: three or four episodes of writing over a several-day period – daily, or every couple of days—about a topic that is emotionally upsetting and that is also hard to talk about or let go of. That’s it. There’s a structure the research subjects often follow—tell the story, add in some layers, look for patterns or connections, consider moving on—but even that little bit of structure isn’t absolutely necessary for healing benefit.

There are various theories as to why this works. Pennebaker first started out with the “inhibition theory”, that it’s hard physiological and emotional work to suppress something—to keep a secret—and when we release it, even if it is in the privacy of words on paper in our journals, we free up physiological and emotional resources for healing. More recently, he’s been looking at the fact that people are storytelling animals, and our life events—big and small—want to seek the container of story. Particularly when we’re experiencing difficult or upsetting events, we want to make sense of them, and putting them into language allows us to make cohesive, coherent sense of them.

There’s also recent research in brain science about how we can actually change neural pathways and reprogram ourselves for success by, among other things, the thoughts we think and the language choices we use. It’s not particularly startling; we’ve probably all had mothers or grandmothers who told us about “glass half-empty” and “glass half-full” orientations, but what’s really exciting is that we apparently actually can change the way we think and behave through the words that we choose. And writing is a powerful way to anchor in different choices. Pennebaker says that even choosing to write “I am not happy” rather than “I am sad” gives the brain a shot of good word juice.
Q: It’s like writing helps digest the experience, whatever that experience is.

KA: Yes, and some fiber to go along with it!

Q: What do you say to someone who is just getting started?

KA: I say, “welcome!” And I suggest spending some time developing a relationship with the journal. Making friends with your journal is just like creating any other relationship; it takes time to get acquainted and build trust. Both literally and metaphorically, the journal is an extension of the self.

Q: How does a person build a relationship with the journal?

KA: One of the first things is to find a journal you’re comfortable with. Computer, spiral notebook, pretty blank book, yellow pad – doesn’t matter, but you need to like it and feel good, or at least neutral, about writing in it. If you’re a wide-lined person, don’t write on narrow-lined paper. If you hate to write by hand, find a good on-line journal method (I love LifeJournal by Chronicle Software, and they just released an online version). If you love glitter gel pens or mechanical pencils, buy them by the dozen. These seemingly silly decisions can go a long way toward building a journal relationship.

Then you can start experimenting with different ways to write. My whole teaching methodology is based on the idea that people succeed when they have lots of choices – including lots of techniques, but also lots of permission to write or not write. There may be weeks or months between entries. Then there may be weeks or months when you write a lot.
Most people do better if they have some structure to begin with. Can you realistically commit to two or three times a week? Can you agree with yourself that you'll write for five minutes every morning when you get to the office, just to organize and plan your day? Can you take twenty minutes when you wake up with a dream to get it on the page? Giving yourself these accountabilities is a powerful statement about your willingness to devote attention to your own well-being and self-care.

Q: Is journal writing good for everyone?
KA: Well it's not a cure-all or panacea, and I've certainly seen plenty of people who used their journals as avoidance, or a way to beat themselves up, or to justify choices that they knew in their heart of hearts weren't healthy. There are some people who find journal writing frustrating or demoralizing or generally more challenging than helpful. Journal writing isn't necessarily good for everyone. But a structured, intentional approach to writing can have therapeutic benefit for nearly everyone who is willing to align with best-practice standards. That's where having a coach or counselor who has studied journal therapy or therapeutic writing can come in very handy.

Q: Why do people resist journaling even though they know it's good for them?
KA: Sometimes because they figure they'll probably find out stuff that they don't really want to know. The beauty and sometimes curse of journal writing is that it lets you read your own mind. It can be scary to find out what's lurking in the darkness of your own shadows.

Quite a few years ago now I spent two years setting up a journal therapy program for people who had been horribly abused as children. Everyone was dealing with excruciating psychological and emotional pain. These clients were often afraid to write about their lives because their abuse had been loaded up with threats of great harm if they told anyone. Or it was simply too ghastly to put into words. That led me to investigate how to make journal writing safe for people healing from the deepest psychological and emotional wounds. I found that structure; pacing; containment; and permission were key factors. This is all imbedded in a methodology that I call the Journal Ladder, which I've written about extensively.
I guess my rule of thumb is that I see the journal as a healing tool, and if it’s feeling like a burden or a scary nightmare, then I work with people to back it off so that it feels manageable, purposeful and safe. A lot of barriers can be overcome with some basic teaching about how to maintain a journal environment that is safe and protected.

Q: In your own journal do you experience times when it feels like it’s not going anywhere?
KA: Oh, sure. Sometimes I bore myself silly. Sometimes I just wander around in circles and never come to resolution. Sometimes this is because there’s something I don’t want to look at, so I just ask myself the journal question, “What don’t I want to know?” or “What am I avoiding?” Sometimes I’m in a gestation period where I’m not yet word-ripe. I had a meditation teacher who used to say, “Winter is not a mistake,” and sometimes emptiness needs to be honored and respected. Sometimes I’m not supposed to be writing—I’m supposed to be doing my dishes, or riding my bike, or going to a movie with a friend.

Q: You make journal writing sound accessible to just about anyone!
KA: That’s the mission of my business, the Center for Journal Therapy – to make the healing art and science of journal writing accessible to all who desire self-directed change. In nearly 30 years of doing this work, I’ve learned a lot about how the vast power of writing for healing, growth and change. Yet there’s always something about beginner mind that I’m always yearning to come back to. The simplicity and elegance of the journal allows us to know ourselves better, like ourselves more and feel more peaceful in our own skin. People who know who they are and like themselves have no incentive to create or participate in unhealthy behaviors or relationships. People who are peaceful have no incentive to make war. The journal helps us learn to live peacefully, within and without. And to me, a peaceful heart, mind and spirit is the greatest gift of the journal.

© 2013 Kathleen Adams, Center for Journal Therapy

This interview is offered with much appreciation to Kathleen for sharing her expertise with TILT readers. Remember to stay tuned for another interview that will highlight the use of technology within therapeutic writing. Don’t miss our Love of Books section where you can read about Pennebaker’s new book Writing to Heal.
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DO NOT FEED THE TROLLS!
It’s hard to miss the warnings not to respond to those who post inflammatory comments in an attempt to wreak havoc in online forums, YouTube comments and, unbelievably, memorial sites. In the most extreme cases, some trolls have been identified and faced criminal charges for their reprehensible and threatening remarks. However, there are times when someone is simply expressing a strong, dissenting opinion, only to face inappropriate accusations of trolling.

Most of us who create online content struggle with how to encourage discussion while shutting down those who are posting comments that are abusive or offensive. This is where an ounce of prevention is important. Comment sections are subject to the broken windows theory of vandalism in neighborhoods. Social scientists studying vandalism found that neighborhoods that were well-maintained and cleaned up graffiti and vandalism promptly were more likely to prevent more serious crime and further destruction of property. Similarly, a solid policy on how you plan to moderate comments is likely to encourage serious and thoughtful comments.
Simon occasionally thought about being a nicer person but it was so much more fun being a troll.

because you are creating a community that makes it safe to participate in the discussion.

Most online community comment policies outline what will and will not be tolerated. It is important to let everyone know that while respectful disagreement is encouraged, profanity or personal attacks will be removed and could lead to the individual being banned from your site. Many sites also require that those who post comments identify themselves by their name and email address as anonymity similarly leads to disinhibition when it comes to how people decide to comment.

If you do decide to let a strongly worded comment stand, it is important that you do take steps to respond in a friendly but firm manner when required. Easier said than done, but with practice you can achieve an assertive tone in your responses that will feel right for you and steer the conversation in a healthy and respectful direction.

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The Benefits of Blogging for Better Student Writing
The Benefits of Blogging for Better Student Writing

A Review

Jessica L. Scott-Reid
As researchers Nicole B. Ellison and Yuehua Wu (2008) state, “Many educators are excited by the potential for new Internet technologies, such as blogs . . . to reinvigorate student engagement and learning” (p. 100). In this technologically driven era, how do new tools like online blogs actually aid students and teachers in the classroom setting? And more specifically, does blogging help to facilitate better student writing?

In their study, *Blogging in the classroom: A preliminary exploration of student attitudes and impact on comprehension*, Ellison and Wu claim that “millennial-learners”, students aged 8-18, are so involved in, and engaged with, media and technology that they may “respond more positively to teaching practices that incorporate these tools” (p. 100). One of these tools is the blog, or personal web log. Different from a normal journal or diary, which is typically written in private, one of the most unique features of the blog is public audience. While privacy settings can be customized, the majority of blogs are viewable by anyone with access to the Internet. Further, those reading a blog are also permitted, and often encouraged, to comment on the content. Due not only to the personal nature of blogging, but also the opportunity that students have to give and receive feedback on each other’s work, blogs offer educators a unique and practical tool for the teaching process, particularly in the area of writing.

With the unique feedback feature, Ellison and Wu theorize that students may become more invested in their writing if done via blogging (p. 105). In other words, by knowing that fellow students, or potentially even a global audience, may be reviewing and commenting on their work, students may think more critically about assignments and care more about their published product. To help prove this claim, Ellison and Wu conducted an experiment focused on student perceptions regarding the educational benefits of blogging. Using undergraduate level students, the researchers asked them to complete classroom assignments via traditional pen and paper method, as well as via online blogs. After completing their assignments using the two different methods, the students were then asked to respond to questions regarding the helpfulness of different features of blogging. Overall, students reported that the opportunity
to read other students’ work was perceived as the most helpful feature of blogging, over traditional classroom writing practices. Further, the novelty and convenience of online blogging, along with the less-formal writing voice that the medium allowed for, were also deemed as perceived benefits. Deviating from the authors’ original predictions however, resulting data showed that “students believe that gains in understanding are most likely to result from reading other students’ blogs as opposed to writing their own entries or reading comments from others about one’s entry” (p. 115). Ellison and Wu explain these findings as a result of a lack of guidance regarding how students were to “reconcile their notions of ‘blogging’ with academic study” (p. 117), in other words, there was a gap in instruction on how students were to most effectively utilize the blogging process for completing schoolwork, particularly in regards to the commenting feature. The authors conclude that it is only with “explicit guidance in regards to defining their position and reflecting on their ideas . . . can the pedagogical promise of blogging be met” (p. 119).

In a subsequent study, *The Impact of Blogging and Scaffolding on Primary School Pupil’s Narrative Writing*, authors Ruth Mei Fen Wong and Khe Foon Hew (2010) take up some of the issues and questions that the work of Ellison and Wu leave open for discussion. Wong and Hew hypothesize that “in order to achieve increased pupils’ performance” certain forms of guidance or assignment-specific “scaffolding” need to be put in place when technological tools, such as blogs, are used in the classroom (p. 4). To seek out proof of their claims Wong and Hew gave students, aged 10-13, pre and post-tests consisting of narrative writing tasks. Between the two tests, over a period of three weeks, students were introduced to blogging and given a writing guide (scaffolding), instructing them
on how to effectively leave comments on others’ work. Students went on to create four drafts of their writing, receiving and providing feedback on each other’s work at each stage of drafting.

In addition to collecting data on the students’ perceived benefits of blogging, (which stated that the receiving of comments from fellow students and writing for a wider audience were the most beneficial features) the most powerful data yielded by Wong and Hew’s research was the documented improvements in the student’s writing skills. After practicing writing via blogging, and giving and receiving peer-to-peer feedback, students showed improved skills in all three tested areas of content, language, and overall. Wong and Hew state that the students’ “total scores for the post-test showed a significant gain compared to that of their pre-test scores, after the blogging and scaffolding treatment” (p. 10). Thus it is concluded in this study that, “the use of blogging and scaffolding can help improve pupils’ narrative writing ability” (p. 10).

From these two studies it may be easy to conclude that the use of blogging in the classroom, when accompanied with explicit guidelines, can result in improved student writing, both actual and perceived. But what must be taken into further consideration is the particular type of writing that these students engaged in. While Ellison and Wu utilized a read-and-respond method, and Wong and Hew focused on narrative writing, neither study explores the possible benefits of reflective writing, nor how this rich method may be applied to blogging in an academic setting.

Discussing the benefits of reflective writing within an academic environment, in their article and guide *Helping students meet the challenges of academic writing*, authors Linda Fernsten and Mary Reda (2011) find that “by systematically exploring writer identity issues [via the authors’ specific reflective writing exercises] in a series of assignments,
our students demonstrate a clearer understanding of the sophisticated and multi-layered challenges writers face in an academic environment” (p. 173). Overall, the authors found that reflective practices “do substantially alter students’ self-perceptions as writers and, ultimately, their ability to write more effectively”.

The benefits of reflective “learning journals” have been known for some time. Author Paul Trafford (2005), in his article Mobile Blogs, Personal Reflections and Learning Environment describes the basic learning journal as a way of “documenting learning and collecting information for self analysis and reflection” (p. 60). In an attempt to translate these benefits as they might apply to online blogs, Trafford asks, “So how does blogging differ from the non-electronic learning journal?” (p. 62). To answer his question he reiterates what we have learned here, that unlike traditional reflective learning journals, blogs are public. Again, the advantage of this feature, as he explains, is that “other students in the class, or other visitors, can read the logs, and in this respect, the learning is a shared experience or studying is a shared experience” (p. 62). Researchers Faizah Majid and Najmiyyah Adnan (2011) also sought to investigate how reflective blogging could help develop better writers, in their study Personal blogs and reflective writing: a case study, and found the following features to be indicated as strengths of blogging:

- Autonomous learning
- Providing alternative ‘voice’
- Promoting personal development
- Encourage higher quality writing
- Thinking of the audience
- Exposure to technology resources
- Easy editing application (p. 621)

It has become widely accepted that reflective writing practices in an academic setting, including reflective learning journals, can help enhance students’ willingness and ability to write. Considering these recent studies it can then be suggested that the benefits of such methods can be developed even further when applied to the public medium of online blogs. Whether we are discussing reflective writing, reader comprehension, or narrative composition, many of the above noted features have been indicated as beneficial qualities of blogging in facilitating better writing. Overall, it appears that offering students the chance to take control of their work and of their positions as writers,
as well as giving them the opportunity to share their work with an audience outside of the traditional student-teacher relationship, make blogging an effective tool in the classroom setting.

One final feature of blogging remains, however, which must be considered before we can confidently answer the question regarding the benefits of blogging for student writing. In their article *Writing therapy using new technologies: the art of blogging*, authors DeeAnna Nagel and Kate Anthony (2009) discuss a number of potentially harmful features of online communication tools, including the blog. Coined by psychotherapist Kali Munro in 2002, Nagel and Anthony describe one such issue known as “emotional hit and run”, and how it applies to the blogging world: “A person blogs in response to thought, action, or occurrence. The blog entry may be impromptu with little forethought given. Within minutes, the blog appears on the World Wide Web. Similarly, a person may comment onto a blog with a quick and affective response. In either case, the blogger or the person leaving a comment has no control over when any response may be read” (p. 42). Nagel and Anthony explain that there is a permanency when utilizing the medium of blogging, for both writers and commenters (p. 42). Blog and comment postings that are done publicly can follow a student for a lifetime. When we add the feature of immediacy, issues of emotion play a part in the ethical concerns of blogging. Should students at the primary, senior, or even college level be subjected to having their narrative writing abilities, or personal reflections available for all to see, for years to come?

While having a public audience is claimed by many students to be one of the most beneficial features of blogging, there is an obvious need for further discussion regarding the ethical concerns this presents. As Nagel and Anthony describe, the “aftermath that follows the use of blogging as journaling” must be considered (p. 42).

Regarding the question “does blogging help to facilitate better student writing?” the answer is, yes. Recent literature provide a clear indication that online blogging can aid students in a variety of areas of academic writing, when accompanied by explicit guidelines regarding writing and commenting. Peer-to-peer feedback, writing for a broader audience, and the ability to share in the reflection process, are indicated as most beneficial in aiding the student writing process and product,
on both student-perceived and teacher-tested levels. What is apparent from this discussion however, is the need for further investigation into the ethical implications of the public feature of online blogs, due to the potential immediacy and permanency of students’ writing. Overall however, it can be said that blogging in the classroom can and should be considered and utilized as an effective tool for facilitating better student writing.

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Jessica L. Scott-Reid has bachelor’s degree in communications and is a recent master’s graduate in the fields of integrated and cultural studies. She works as a freelance writer, including a weekly national column for Notable.ca, and blog for the expat site The German Way and More.
EXCHANGE THEORY is both spot-on and unfeeling. Its basic tenets are clear in the name: our behaviors are guided by a kind of exchange. We gauge the costs and rewards of something and act accordingly. Are the benefits greater than the costs? Great, then I’ll do it. Hard to argue with this theory. Another aspect of it has to do with alternatives. That is to say; do you have any? If you are living in a small, closed society, surrounded by people who know the intimates of your life, it’s unlikely that when discouraged by the course of your relationship that you’ll consider straying. First, the costs probably outweigh the rewards (you are likely to be caught) and there is a dearth of alternatives in your closed off world. Where are you going to go when everyone knows your name?

However, imagine the opposite of that small community. Imagine the communities of today with the anonymity that exists in modern life. Now, add to that the internet and the ability to reach out to zillions and, well, the likelihood of straying just
increased since 1) the costs are limited since your secret is easy to keep in an open society and 2) the alternatives are falling at your feet.

Exchange theory can guide your reading of Webdultery, the 2010 film by Charles Wahl. Like so many other films this one tells the tale of the modern couple who have grown bored with one another. Together since they were young, their sex life has dwindled and their commonalities are focused almost exclusively raising their son. Each finds a “chat room buddy.” There’s no guilt initially since, after all, they are “only talking.”

The stage is set for the classic story of webdultery. The wife is buried in her work. The husband is struggling with his writing. We might go as far as to say that he feels a bit emasculated by her earnings and his lack thereof. So, both reach out to a website for married people who want to stray. They both find someone who says, “I understand.” There’s such allure in the sense that someone really gets you! The alternatives to working on the relationship are far too easy. The costs to this kind of renewed excitement are low. Who the hell wouldn’t do it?

So, each forge into new encounters. The internet has made it easy to avoid feeling like some key life experience is eluding them. She notes, “I want something now so I don’t look back and feel like I missed out on all these things.” Later she ponders, “Don’t you ever wonder if the person you were meant to be with were still out there?” In this post-modern world we can ask that question and we can indeed explore it. Get thee to the nearest chat room.

All the signs are there for this couple. The boredom. The excitement of leaning into their laptop for the latest flirt from a stranger who is feeling less and less strange and more familiar. The eventual touch of a hand that feels as intimate as anything they’ve felt in a while. At home they “don’t joke around anymore.” Online they can be clever, witty and alluring.

Again, the rewards simply outweigh the costs. It’s not really adultery to “just talk.” We are still debating where the line begins and ends with internet intimacy. Thus, it’s easy to discount it and claim innocence. And the alternatives to the sameness of a relationship are so abundant that, well, I don’t need to tell you how abundant they are. Cliché but appropriate to say, “it’s a click away”.

Webdultery, while not the most original work (you might find yourself humming “If you like Pina Coladas…”), is an interesting look at the lure of the chat room and where the lines of “cheating” might be drawn. Watch it with a partner. Or not, depending on the costs and rewards of such a topic surfacing!
Can You Go Online On the Ride Of Your Life?

Some people don’t believe me when I describe the early years of my career. I had an office in the student’s association. In it, there was a desk, a chair for me, and an extra chair for a visitor, and a few bookcases. No computer - the association’s office manager had the only computer on the floor. We handed her our letters, handwritten on a paper, and she typed them and printed them for us. No email yet, no Internet, no browsing, no Googling. I had an “inbox tray” on my desk, and on top of it, stacked an “outbox” tray, both of them filled with scribbled memo paper. We did rent a cell phone for our major annual event, though. It was great because the battery could hold for an entire hour and the phone was only the size of a construction brick.

Today, more than 20 years later, I work on the go from different parts of the world, talking, texting, typing, printing, designing, and blogging, all from a small device that has no buttons on it.
and fits neatly in my pocket. I can be in Tel Aviv and coach a client in Boston via video call, and right after edit a document together with my colleagues in Los Angeles.

The world has definitely shrunk, and when it comes to coaching, and coach-training, the online world opens up new possibilities that push the boundaries of the coaching profession towards new frontiers. I received my coach training at the Institute for Life Coach Training (ILCT) and now also teach at the ILCT – online, without being in the same room with fellow students and teacher. In my training process I was connected with people from all over the country, and all over the world, who all share the same passion and values of human development, growth, and thriving. In addition to providing me with the tools I needed, my coach training connected me with a pastor from Kansas, a young professional from Egypt, and an accomplished media entrepreneur from LA. It gave me the opportunity to see the essential processes of transformation through the eyes of my colleagues, and to develop a broader view of the universal human desire for self-actualization and happiness.

As a coach, I am able to connect with people all over the world, and to interact with them in a richer and deeper way – share web and mobile exercises and resources, use video when needed, and turn it off when it’s not. This new era of coaching is also the era of the digital coach. A coach whose presence is not limited, who is accessible and online, and who uses the latest technology to facilitate a runway for change. A coach who helps you go on the ride of your life.

**About the Author**

Ran Zilca is a research scientist, writer, entrepreneur, and a life coach. He is the Chief Scientist of bLife, a company developing scientifically-based digital well-being tools. Ran has published numerous scientific papers and patents while leading R&D projects at IBM Research and the Israeli military over the course of the past 20 years. In 2006 he founded Signal Patterns, a company that marries psychology and technology into a new field called Positive Computing, working with leading authors and scientists.

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• how to increase positive communications
• how to promote and manage your brand in your community and on the internet
• why cyberculture is a culture to understand
• how to manage your professional online presence
• how to utilize social media to broadcast your brand and your niche
• --------> finally, how to sell yourself without selling out!
WHAT’S YOUR COACHING STRATEGY?

by Kim Ades
As professional coaches, we rely on knowledge, intuition, techniques and tools to serve our clients and help them achieve their goals. But that’s not all we require. We require data to accurately understand how they think, what they believe and how they behave in a variety of circumstances. This data is crucial for really understanding what it is that interferes with their ability to reach their goals and live their ideal lives.

Based on the premise that results are really a function of a person’s thinking and beliefs over time, coaches need to find a way to consistently access and tap into this stream of thinking in order for a transformational effect to take place rather than a short-term change for a short-term result. The more that clients can partner with you to identify the beliefs that sabotage their success, the more powerful the coaching and the more awesome the coaching results can be.

I personally insist that my clients write daily in an online journal to express their thoughts, feelings and perspectives in between coaching sessions. I supply them with journaling prompts every few days so that they have a starting point in their journaling. It not only keeps my clients focused and invested in the process, but also provides me with invaluable insights that enable me to dig in and really identify the core beliefs that both help and hinder my clients. With this information, I am able to help my clients make monumental and transformational changes that are sustainable well into the future. I have made journaling the cornerstone of the Frame of Mind Coaching process equipping me to deliver outstanding results to my clients every time.

Many people ask me if this approach works for executives and whether or not I experience resistance from them about journaling. At this point, my coaching niche is very well defined. I coach highly driven, highly successful, high profile, public-facing individuals who tend to have a fair bit of exposure in the media. I will NOT coach them unless they have agreed to journal on a daily basis and this is something we address even before they engage me as their coach. I make it clear that they come to me for results and this is the process I use to deliver results that will consistently knock their socks off. I don’t give them an option, rather I
make it a condition of working together.

Each month, I run a training class for coaches in how to read and respond to journals. I supply a series of journals and use them as case studies to examine and play with the art of coaching through the use of this data. The discussion is fascinating and really provides tremendous learning for all the participants. In this article, I will provide you with the same kind of experience – I will select a real-life journal to use as a case study and the basis for this discussion. The goal is to demonstrate the value of the data that is collected from client journals and provide some guidance in how to respond to these journal entries.

The following journal entry was written by a client who is in week seven of a 10 week coaching program with Frame of Mind Coaching. She is the Vice President of Marketing for a major retail brand. She came to me for coaching after her team filed a complaint about her to Human Resources. During the coaching process, she has put aside her anger and frustration and has worked diligently to rebuild her team. She has taken full responsibility for her contribution to the turmoil she has experienced in her job, and continues to work on her own personal development. In this journal, she hit a bit of a set-back in her work environment. Here’s what she wrote:

This morning my sister sent me a text message saying that Sheila (a close friend of the family) had died. Sheila was my step-mother’s best friend. She always offered me unconditional acceptance even when my step-mother and I were not getting along. Sheila and her husband both have a special place in my heart. When I got to work, I had a meeting with the ‘ecom’ group and my boss. I did not have a lot of patience in the meeting, and I snapped. After the meeting, I sent an apology email to my boss and the girls I was short with. I wrote, “I am sorry I was off this morning, but I just found out a close friend of the family died. She meant a lot to me and I am struggling this morning.” My boss then called me into his office and reprimanded me for my behavior and told me I cannot take out my feelings on others. I was shocked with his lack of compassion, as I had acknowledged my behavior, apologized, and even expressed a bit of vulnerability in my experience. I now feel like this will always come up for my boss and me. I feel that I will always be in the wrong in his eyes and I will always be the "emotional" one. As soon as the morning meeting was over I went for a walk, called a friend, and found myself
sobbing. I am surprised that this has hit me so deeply. It hurts and I am angry that my boss kicked me when I was down. I think I have learned everything I need to learn from this boss and I do not think he has anything else to teach me personally or professionally. This death brings back the loss I feel of my step-mother and the feeling of despair associated with the fact that another person on the planet who 'got me' is gone.

Here is how some of the coaches in my training class responded to this journal entry:

1. I am really sorry to hear about your loss. It is a very sad and vulnerable time for you. Of course you are feeling raw. It may not have been appropriate to 'take your feelings out on your team'. With the inner strength you have developed over the past 7 weeks, how can you respond to your boss and your team?

2. So, your apology and acceptance was conditional? What have you learned from Anne? By the way, I'm sorry to hear about Anne. Take time to really feel your emotions over the next few weeks. How do you think you could celebrate Anne's life?

3. I am so sorry for your loss. Anne sounds like a wonderful person. I too have felt the loss of a person who 'gets' me. It sucks. I've found that one way out of the muck is to find things to be grateful for. Gratitude heals, but grieving is important. Are you going to the funeral? Regarding your boss, I am reminded of one of the Four Agreements: Don't take anything personally. Can you put what happened with your boss on the shelf for now while you honor the passing of your friend?

4. I'm sorry for your loss. This is a new twist in life. Decide how you want to show up when circumstances aren't perfect. You recognized that you didn't show up how you wanted to in the meeting and you apologized. How do you want to show up from now on with this boss?

5. I am so sorry for your loss. Tell me more about Anne and the impact she had on your life. You deserve compassion in times like this and I'm sorry you didn't get that.

6. I sense the impact of this loss for you and can tell Anne was someone who meant a great deal to you. You have made such great strides at work. Perhaps this is another opportunity for you to flex your new muscle. Is there another
way you can look at what happened that doesn’t leave you feeling in this old, familiar place?

While the coaching responses were fascinating, my interpretation of this journal is that the client did not need coaching at this point. Instead, she needed a compassionate ear regarding the death of Anne and she needed validation that her hurt feelings were appropriate regarding the way her boss treated her.

In my opinion, the real thing that needed to happen was for me to remove myself from the role of coach and reach out to her personally. So, I picked up the phone and made an unscheduled call to her. You could hear the surprise in her voice when she answered to find me on the line. She was clearly happy to hear from me because from her perspective, I too am one of the few people who ‘gets’ her. I could almost hear the relief in her tone when she heard my voice.

A coach needs to see a person in their best light and hold a vision of them in that light constantly. That’s what I did for her. I gave her space to talk about her experience, to get her emotions out in the open, and I validated her feelings of being hurt by her boss. She had a right to feel that his actions were inappropriate under the circumstances.

While my first instinct and my response was to lean in and be there for my client, I also recognized that there were
definitely some issues in this journal entry that needed to be addressed later when her emotions weren’t so raw in regard to her loss.

First, I wanted to explore with her whether or not her core values are a match to her boss’s core values. What lessons does she still have yet to learn from her relationship and interactions with her boss or has she already walked away with everything she needs to learn? There are times when we must come to realize that certain situations are not healthy for us and the best thing we can do for our own happiness is to remove ourselves from these situations and move forward. Is this one such example or is there more work to do? In the past, this client had put up with her boss’s inappropriate behavior. But this time she felt it was unfair and she was standing up for herself and determined that she was ready to move on to things that are healthier for her. At a more appropriate time, as her coach, I would want to discuss the possibility of moving on in her employment and support her in removing herself from this situation if that’s what she chose. As we well know, moving from one position to another is often wrought with concerns, challenges, and opportunities – all of which are perfect to work on in a coaching structure. The time to address these issues would come after the client took some time for herself to grieve her loss.

For me, as a coach, I want to have a relationship with my client that goes further than just coaching. This could cause some controversy in the coaching world, but it’s exactly these kinds of relationships that build the kind of trust that leads to client openness, vulnerability, and their willingness to take major leaps forward. For me, unscheduled calls are a big part of establishing this deeper relationship with my clients.

What do I mean by an unscheduled call? An unscheduled call is an unplanned, non-billable call that you, as a coach, initiate with your clients upon reading a journal entry that you feel needs immediate attention. Your client is not expecting you to call, but feels completely supported and valued when they pick up the phone and hear your voice on the line.

There are no steadfast rules to making unscheduled client calls. For me, it depends on the client and longevity of the coaching relationship. On average, I make one unscheduled call during a 10-week coaching period with a client. While the call only

FOR ME, AS A COACH, I WANT TO HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH MY CLIENT THAT GOES FURTHER THAN JUST COACHING. THIS COULD CAUSE SOME CONTROVERSY IN THE COACHING WORLD, BUT IT’S EXACTLY THESE KINDS OF RELATIONSHIPS THAT BUILD TRUST.
requires 10-15 minutes of my time, the value created is tremendous and the impact is significant. The client’s coaching resistance goes down, which is very important and their desire to work on themselves is increased. My ability, as a coach, to get to those deep dark places more quickly is multiplied because the client’s trust and intimacy increases. As a coach, if my focus is on client results and release myself of the strict borders that normally define a ‘coaching relationship’, my ability to deliver an outstanding experience is cemented with each client. Their satisfaction shows with each referral they send my way. It’s a win-win situation for both the client and the coach.

Coaches often wonder if there ever comes a time when they should step out of the coaching role to simply lend a compassionate ear to their client. For me, this client clearly needed a compassionate ear and time to process her grief before we continued the coaching process related to her relationship and future with her boss. Sometimes the human instinct that drives compassion is the perfect coaching strategy.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Kim Ades is president and founder of Frame of Mind Coaching and JournalEngine™ Software. Author, speaker, entrepreneur, coach, and mother of 5, Kim is one of North America’s foremost experts on performance through thought management. By using her unique process of coaching through journaling, she works with high profile clients to unveil and switch their thought patterns to ignite significant organizational change and personal transformation. For an inside look at the journaling process she uses to coach her clients, please visit [www.journalengine.com](http://www.journalengine.com).
This edition’s column is written with grateful thanks to Jan Stiff. Jan was a student on the Diploma in Online Therapeutic Supervision recently and used a teaching and learning session to introduce an online supervision model she had adapted from a GP consultation model for use with trainees. Jan’s original career was in nursing and she is married to a GP. She now works online, particularly with young people.

It is refreshing and illuminating to consider models from other professions, to discover if / how they might add to our own body of knowledge and way of offering online supervision.

The model Jan presented is based on Roger Neighbour’s work, ‘The Inner Consultation’ (2004) and is intended to be a practical approach rather than a theoretical one. Combining that awareness with the reflectiveness of the words ‘inner consultation’ had me hooked, as did the assertion by Neighbour that this is a journey rather than a destination – echoes of Egan!

As a visual person, I find Neighbour’s way of illustrating the 5 checkpoints of the journey really helpful. He shows a hand with five named fingers:

- Housekeeping
- Connect
- Summarize
- Handover
- Safety net

There’s a resonance with Page and Wosket’s cyclical model (1994), which regular readers know that I like and have adapted for online work. However, I believe that this model adds important ‘extras’. The interpretations of the checkpoints made here are mine, rather than Jan’s or Neighbours.

Both Housekeeping and Connecting are vital parts of online supervision, and can sometimes be missed, particularly in email supervision. Here we may not take the time to do the ‘work around the edges’ that happens in f2f supervision, where we take a few minutes to attend to practical matters and re-connect in a more general sense, before focusing on client work. Housekeeping also includes looking after oneself - and this could include supervision of supervision.
Summarising and therefore checking that we have understood our supervisee, or our supervisor, is at the heart of online supervision. As we so often say ‘there’s no body language, so needs doing through words’. We know it, and we sometimes forget, so online misunderstandings happen! It’s valuable to have this in the checklist.

In online supervision we reach a point in a session where we must trust the supervisee and handover, or hand back, the client work to them. We have done what we can together, and it is time to let go for this moment.

The idea of safety netting appeals to me, as it is perhaps an area that is paid less attention in online supervision. We don’t see whether our supervisee is looking less physically well, more tired - even when using video links this can be tricky. Then there is safety netting around technology – how are we safeguarding clients? Are we aware of changing perspectives within the online world? For example, we might consider security and confidentiality in light of recent revelations about the monitoring activities of the US and UK governments.

Having become enthralled by making my own connections around Neighbour’s model, I searched for anyone building on it and found the work of Ian McKelvey (2010), who developed a further model, ‘The consultation hill’. Again this appeals to my visual senses. McKelvey also has 5 stages (Is there a ‘law’ stating that 5 items are the ideal number to remember?) which are:

- Preparation (base camp)
- Ascent
- Shared summit
- Descent
- Reflection

What a fabulous model on which to base online supervision. Obviously how I am interpreting those stages is completely different from McKelvey’s use of them with trainee GPs. I love this analogy with climbing – in my mind, online supervision is sometimes like climbing Everest, and sometimes a mere stroll up a hill, but hopefully both with the same sense of achievement.

Base camp: the place where supervisor and supervisee
prepare for the session, individually and later together. So ensuring that any pre-session information is exchanged by email, that back-up systems are in place in case of internet problems – in my case, making sure I do check my mobile phone regularly, and it’s switched to vibrate for a live session – as well as thinking back to last session in case anything needs bringing back. Together in base camp, we might set goals/an agenda for a live session or, in email supervision, state what we want from our supervisor this time. Then we are ready to climb.

For me, the ascent covers the hard work, as well admiring the view or simply ‘stopping to stare’ in order for ideas to flow about the counselling process. It’s about glorying in creativity – on the mountain, the beauty of our world; online through creative ways of understanding the process – as well as getting lost in swirling mists, and maybe having to stand still till it clears.

The shared summit is achieved – we’ve reached our joint goal. In synchronous sessions, that can be easier to notice together. Do we check on this, and celebrate enough in asynchronous supervision? How have we achieved the summit? Has the climb been supervisee-led, with the supervisor providing a safe ‘tail’?

My vision of the descent is that part of supervision when we think how the work is taken back to our online clients. We are coming back to the day-to-day work of the counsellor. This may be done together, or in the case of email supervision, through follow-up emails.

Lastly comes reflection. We are back at base camp, together or alone. What has worked well? What needs to be changed? How can I feed things back effectively to my supervisor/supervisee? Do I need to do this in a live session? Is it better done by email? Have I paid enough attention to the online relationship to be able to say what needs saying?

What a pleasure it has been to explore these new-to-me models. Thank you, Jan, for setting me off on the journey!

REFERENCES


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Do you have a great idea for a mental health or therapy App? Do you want to create a great looking, user friendly App that consistently works across all major platforms and truly transform the lives of users?

Me too.

It seems like Apps are the new “books” in mental health these days. Just about everyone has a great idea about publishing one. But, like books, only a few become successful. So, here are some ideas to help you get started in creating a great mental health App and avoid some known problems along the way.

1 You CAN Build A Great Mental Health App.

There’s a growing market need for mental health Apps as the world is becoming more technologically mobile and more consumers worldwide are seeking mental health care online. The Department of Defense and the Veterans Association have created some great mental health Apps and so can you. If you truly believe that your App idea will create positive change, don’t be deterred by the work involved. If it was easy, everyone would be doing it. Many software tools are on the market and many experts are at your disposal. Reach out to others who have the skills and experience you need to create a great work. There is method behind the “magic,” so learn from those who have gone before you to make a great therapy App.
2 Trash Talking Apps.

The last thing you want to do is spend a lot of time, money and energy on an unused or un-purchased app. It kills the spirit. In the last month we found more than 600 mental health related Apps in the iTunes and Android stores alone. Most have few stars and very few downloads. The majority of them are garbage, and that is being generous. Like most mental health or self-help books, the author has competency in one area and a lack of awareness in other areas that make a book, or an App, marketable or successful. So, invest your time and expertise wisely by counting the cost of creating a great counseling or therapy App. Prepare to go all the way with your idea before you start.

3 Don’t Trust Your Mother.

Friends and family fall into the category of “Fan Club” rather than target buyer market (I hope). Clearly identify the felt needs or use cases of the clients or user groups you hope will buy your App. See if your app idea already exists by reviewing a list of all the major mental health Apps at www.telementalhealthcomparisons.com/apps (which includes the better Apps of the bunch we researched). If your App idea already exists, consider how you can significantly improve upon an existing App or outsell it through sales and marketing efforts (more on that later). If this is a journaling App, for instance, find ways to make yours uniquely different by adding a certain protocol or a certain set of questions or functions that make journaling easier or more of a pleasure than other journaling Apps. Before you start making a mental health App, make sure that your App idea is truly appealing to your target market.

4 Build A Bad App, a Great Team, or Both.

One of the biggest mistakes of mental health App makers is creating the App alone. This usually leads to either failure to launch or a lousy app that never sells. It creates heartache, it’s expensive and it harms your credibility. When creating an App, it is helpful to have a team with different competencies that rely on and respect each other. A healthy tension among design, programming and therapy expertise will guide you to create great looking, user friendly Apps that consistently work across all major platforms (both now and in platform updates) and truly transform the lives of users. Consider your strengths and collaborate with those better than you in the other areas.

“User Experience,” for instance, is actually a science and an art that few do well. Yet, it is critical for success in App creation. Programming bugs, crashes, failure to update and poor functionality will kill your App in the marketplace within days. You can contract with talent or allow them to share in the proposed revenue. But
decide who will own the rights to the App and make a written agreement on the limitations of use before you begin. It may be worth giving up some rights or profit to ensure your success.

5 Avoid Hidden Costs in App Development.

Maintenance is the hidden cost of App development. It is very expensive to retrofit functions and the expense grows with each platform update. Think of the future functions and needs of the App and make plans to meet those needs. It will cause you to make some sacrifices up front, but it will be worth it in the long run. Apps don’t sustain themselves and they don’t adapt to new iOS or Android updates on their own. Consider the features you will want in the future and build in the options for those capabilities from the start.

Your Apps Retirement Plan.

Apps are more like children than books. Neglecting the future needs of your App will cost you. They need feeding and caring to be successful. So, make a business plan for your App (most therapists cringe when they hear that sentence). In essence, a business plan is a treatment plan and relapse prevention plan for your App (plus a few other items).
Like retirement planning, estimating and planning for the needs of your App will help you be successful for the long haul. Do some research and estimate costs and revenue based on similar Apps that are in the market. Is the venture worth the likely costs? After the first year, if you don’t update your design, content or functionality, you’ll be lucky to get your own mother to buy your “old” App. So, make a plan for when you will update the design and the content so that your App stays fresh and relevant to consumers. Consider when your App will be ready to “retire” or require a makeover.

6 Use Stranger Danger to Your Advantage.

You would be amazed at how many Apps have been created without asking the target audience to give feedback on the usability of their App. It is easy to fall in love with your App idea and ignore the reality of consumer sentiment. But like most affairs, reality comes crashing in and blows the fantasy. Avoid this tunnel vision by asking strangers in your target market to be brutally honest with your idea and your beta version before you launch your App in the marketplace. So, invest in User Testing. Your audience will help you see your blind spots and show you refinements that will make your App a success.

7 Restarting.

Some of us have to learn the hard way. If you have already made these mistakes, you are not alone. Forgive yourself and call it experience. Then humble yourself and pick a great team. Learn from your mistakes and start again. Consumers still need your help.

Even with the plethora of “Create your own App” software programs, creating and selling an App is much more difficult than it first appears. For all of you fellow Do-It-Yourselfers out there, consider counting the cost of your time and your potential mistakes before taking on this project. For the tenacious few who are going forward to make great Apps, stick with it. There’s a lot of room for improvement in self-help and therapy Apps domain. It is difficult but rewarding work with a global reach. So, let’s make some Apps that will change the world.

JAY OSTROWSKI
is a Telemental health and marketing innovator with www.BehavioralHealthInnovation.com. BHI created www.telementalhealthcomparisons.com to help professionals choose technology. He lives in Charlotte, NC, USA.
I wrote the title of this article a little 'tongue in cheek' because I think so many therapists and coaches are yet to tap into the amazing potential that blogging can offer for your business.

Many therapists and coaches I speak to give a variety of reasons as to why they are not blogging, such as

- I don't have a blog
- I don't have time
- I don't know what to write about
- I'm worried my peers will judge me

To name a few...

I'd like to address these objections one by one.

#1 I don't have a blog.

Well really, this is no excuse anymore because the installation of a blogging platform such as WordPress is so easy and cheap. If you're not sure how to get started, either outsource the installation of the blog to a savvy teenager, or someone on oDesk.com or elance.com.

I recommend you use the WordPress self-hosted platform (NOT WordPress.com) and host it on your own domain. I also recommend you check out the impressive website themes at StudioPress.com. For under $120 you can have a professional looking website up in no time.

The good news is you can make WordPress look like a regular static website, and then have one area on your site which is your blog where you can regularly update your content with new, fresh and engaging posts for your readers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Clinton Power is a Sydney-based Gestalt therapist and practice dedicated to helping singles and couples move out of relationship pain. He is also the founder of Australia Counselling Directory, a free directory for finding counsellors and psychologists in Australia. Clinton is also a passionate coach and consultant for healthcare.
Are You...

BLOGGING FOR YOUR BUSINESS YET?

#2
I don't have time.

I think this objection is an interesting one. You mean you don’t have time to invest in a proven long-term marketing strategy for your business that can bring you work and clients for years to come? If you’re serious about running your own practice and not working for someone else, it’s essential that you make time.

What works for me is to have a regular writing time each week where I turn off all my distractions. My two favorite tools for writing are the timer on my iPhone- I use the Pomodoro technique for working in time chunks of 25 minutes, and iA Writer, which blanks out the entire screen except for the text I’m writing. These tools help me focus and write quality content on a regular basis.

#3
I don't know what to write about.

If you haven’t blogged before, it can feel difficult to generate ideas to begin with. But what happens over time is it gets easier and easier once you adopt a writing mindset. First of all, you need to start thinking about the most common problems that your clients are grappling with. I love to use a mind map and write down the big themes of my practice, and then start to create blog titles and ideas from these big themes. Mind maps help me think outside the box with their visual appeal and creativity.

Next, you need to start to develop a habit of writing down your ideas every single time you get one. In fact, I got the idea for this article in the shower, so soon as I could, I captured it on my Smartphone to start writing later. My favorite app for this is Evernote - a note-taking app that syncs between all your devices. Then when it’s time to write, I look at my ideas library and decide which idea or topic appeals to me the most.

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About the Author

Clinton Power is a Sydney-based Gestalt therapist and the owner of Clinton Power + Associates - a private practice dedicated to helping singles and couples move out of relationship pain. He is also the founder of Australia Counselling Directory, a free directory for finding counsellors and psychologists in Australia. Clinton is passionate about helping people find their own path to healing. He is a frequent speaker and writer on the topics of relationships, intimacy, and personal growth.

Find him on Google+ or Facebook.
I’m worried my peers will judge me.

This was a big concern of mine when I first started my writing journey, but I soon learned that I had to get over it and develop my voice so I could start broadcasting my message. One of the things that helped me was to write like I was speaking to my ideal client. When I write like it’s a one-to-one conversation, I find that my writing is much more intimate and tends to be more readable.

The fact is, there will always be people who will have some sort of judgement about you and what you do, but when it comes to your business, it’s up to you to develop a mindset for success. And part of the success of your business is your writing.

The funny thing is, I never considered myself a writer, or thought I would be writing for my business as much as I do. But I now realise that writing is an integral part of my business and I wouldn't have built the business I have today without it.

The benefits of blogging for your business are numerous, but some of the ones I’ve seen include:

- you establish yourself as an authority in your chosen niche and field
- your readers perceive you as an expert because they are consuming your valuable and helpful content
- the search engines love you because you are providing fresh content for your blog on an ongoing basis
- more opportunities open up for you, such as speaking engagements, based on the expertise you share on your blog
- you can build valuable relationships with potential clients that can become your client after reading your content for weeks, months or years
- you can build a database of subscribers who want to receive your blogs in their inbox, which then allows you to send them marketing messages over time

Are you starting to get the benefits of blogging for your business?

So no more excuses. It’s time to start blogging so you can share your voice and perspective with the world, and attract clients while doing so.
“The most technologically efficient machine that man has ever invented is the book.”

~NORTHROP FRYE
**ESTABLISHING, MANAGING, AND PROTECTING YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION: A SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE FOR PHYSICIANS AND MEDICAL PRACTICES**

BY KEVIN PHO M.D. & SUSAN GAY

Online health information combined with social media channels like Twitter and Facebook has created a new generation of patients. They are empowered. They have a voice in their own care that they never had before. And more are using social media and physician review sites to choose their doctor or medical practice. Given these stakes, you can’t afford to leave your online reputation to chance.

Kick off your social media efforts today with **Establishing, Managing, and Protecting Your Online Reputation: A Social Media Guide for Physicians and Medical Practices**, a comprehensive resource not available anywhere else. In addition to unique insights from practicing physician and social media pioneer Kevin Pho, MD, this book offers doctors a step-by-step guide on how to use social media to manage an online reputation. It also provides insider tips on how to respond to online ratings and a guide to work with all of the major physician review sites.

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**WRITING TO HEAL**

JAMES PENNEBAKER

_Published by the Center for Journal Therapy_

The simple act of expressing your thoughts and feelings about emotionally challenging experiences on paper is proven to speed your recovery and improve your mental and physical health. This book, written by one of America’s most distinguished research psychologists, guides you through a brief, powerful series of directed writing exercises you can do right in the book. Each will leave you with a stronger sense of value in the world and the ability to accept that life can be good—even when it is sometimes bad.

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