

What Would You Do

IN THE LAST ISSUE WE ASKED:

You are a coach or therapist and you have been engaged with a client using individual chat and support group discussion forum. This client was referred to you through a wellness center in your local community and your sessions have not utilized an audio or video component.

Your client has requested an in-person session at your office. What concerns might you have about making this transition?

What would do you?

Larry F. Saidman responds:

The main concern is the "shock" that the client might experience from the discrepancy between what he or she thought I looked and sounded like...and the reality. Before the appointment I'd address this in a fairly 'light-hearted' way.... maybe by asking the client to share what s/he expects (i.e. what does s/he envision I look like, talk like, etc.), or, by disclosing some information about myself. I'd also invite the client to disclose anything s/he feels comfortable with about what I might experience, as I think that could reduce some anxiety.

Another option could be to suggest one session using an audio or video component, if available.

In the group forum it may be valuable to invite other group members to talk about their experiences with meeting somebody 'in person' after having experienced only an on-line presence.

Christine Perkins responds:

My thoughts are that discussing with the client, their expectations of a f2f meeting and what they are hoping to gain from it would be a helpful first step in approaching any transition in delivery. I would do this using the same technical platform that we had been using, before agreeing to a face-to-face meeting. I would discuss things such as their experience of the service currently, their hopes for to-face contact, whether the transition is to be temporary or longer-term and whether we are both comfortable making the transition.

I would also be taking into consideration any background information relating to safety concerns and perhaps gaining permission to have a discussion with the referring worker about the clients appropriateness for in-person contact if I felt overly concerned.

Essentially, I would contract for the transition and what the session would be used for and make sure I felt safe with an in-person meeting especially if there are minors attending my office before agreeing to the change.

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In each issue of TILT we shall be presenting an ethical dilemma about a Web 2.0 experience and other ethical topics related to mental health and technology, and inviting readers to comment at the Online Therapy Institute's social network. In the following issue of TILT, we shall publish a selection of comments about what YOU would do when faced with the dilemma.

NEXT MONTH'S DILEMMA

You are an online therapist or coach and you have been asked to be interviewed for a webinar series. You will be discussing your area of expertise- for example, motivation, career, anxiety, depression. The webinar is free to members of the hosting organization and others can pay a small fee to join the webinar. The platform offers a chat room for questions and at the end of the interview the host will open the audio lines for live questions from the audience.

You have seen a few negative comments in the chat room but did not recognize the person's name because their chat username was Joh123. When the audio lines open Joh123 begins making the same derogatory remarks verbally that he was previously writing in the chat room and he is addressing you and your area of expertise. You realize Joh123 is a current client of yours. What would you do?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?!

Weigh in at the [OTI/OCI Social Network's Discussion Forum!](#)

