

# NEW INNOVATIONS



# How Do I Start in Counseling

JAY OSTROWSKI

Research has proven that technology can be helpful in counseling and coaching. Clients can gain personal insights and change that they could not have easily taken place without technology. But few have talked about how to actually get started. Most clients are already searching for the magic App that will solve all of their problems.

They just don't talk to you about it. Apps can help enhance the growth of your clients if you use them for specific aims in time limited intervals. But whether you've been watching from the sidelines or have just thought about using technology in your work, you may wonder how to get started. There are some boundaries to keep us in line, but a lot of opportunities to make a big impact on our clients.

## USING APPS IN COUNSELING OR COACHING

It can be overwhelming when you hear about the many Apps or online therapy platforms and the many applications for their use. There are so many ways in which technology can help people in counseling or coaching. The best way to start is to think about how

technology could assist one client with one problem.

Most Apps fall into a few operational categories.

1. **Tracking** behavior numerically by counting something I did, such as the number of times I did the new technique I just learned.
2. **Reminding** me to do something or not do something, like compli-

# It Using Technology or Coaching?

ment my spouse, even though I don't feel like it.

3. **Capturing** my thoughts about the fight I just had with my brother-in-law who really gets on my nerves.
4. **Connecting** with others, like texting my progress to my best friend.
5. **Leading** me to change my thinking and behavior by asking me questions about my current state and reminding me of what and how I need to change.

Consider whether your client would benefit from tracking, reminders, capturing, connecting or leading. I bet they

could use all of them, but restrain your inner hero and just pick one. Then get specific about how often you'd like that information to be gathered or used and what you and the client would do with that output. With these clear objectives in mind, you can search for apps used for these purposes on the comparison site [www.telementalhealth-comparisons.com/apps](http://www.telementalhealth-comparisons.com/apps) to find the app that fits your needs.

It can be both exciting and awkward to introduce a new idea to a client, especially if it is new to you too. It's a bit of a risk to recommend an app or an online service because a bad experience on these venues could cause

the client undue distress and harm your credibility. To get comfortable with making a recommendation, try the technology for yourself first. You may find a personal benefit which would make for a compelling story that would appeal to those you are helping. The trial will also help you discover operational challenges your client might encounter which could help prevent early abandonment of the idea. Keep in mind some basic limitations like - privacy, security, ensuring the client is really on board and if it is really useful for the client's goals. Using apps for one of these purposes may be just what they needed to make that breakthrough.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### JAY OSTROWSKI

is a Telemental health and marketing innovator with [www.BehavioralHealthInnovation.com](http://www.BehavioralHealthInnovation.com). BHI created [www.telementalhealthcomparisons.com](http://www.telementalhealthcomparisons.com) to help professionals choose technology. He lives in Charlotte, NC, USA.



### DISTANCE COUNSELING AND COACHING

When you are ready to provide distance counseling or coaching and have already received training and credentials, the best way to start is by asking your current clients if they'd like to meet online. If you haven't had training, it's a very good idea as there are a number of risks and proto-

cols that you need to know to create both great outcomes and to protect yourself from known legal and ethical risks.

If you need a jumpstart to get clients using your online services consider creating a 2-3 min video of yourself walking the client through the set-up, scheduling and session experience. Make sure the video looks really good as it will be used by the client to decide whether they want to see you

or not. This video could be hosted on your website and link provided to every current and prospective client to consider. You could also have two computers set up in your office to demonstrate what it would look like at the end of a session, if the client is interested.

Talk to colleagues and ask if they are using technology and how.

Using technology in counseling and coaching will take a little effort, but it's worth the effort. While most clients usually embrace technology in practice, it may take a few trials for you to become more comfortable with a new way of working. It may take a few trials before you get it right, but the benefits can truly be life-transforming. ■