

Running head: internet counseling

Technology, Internet



Many people who are depressed for one reason or the other look for someone or something that can help them relieve their pain. The counselors have played a very important role in the society in helping the depressed to overcome this, and be able to live a normal life. However, there are many other people who need to be counseled, yet they are afraid to face the counselors. This has left many deserving people to continue suffering with the problems that would have been averted by counseling.

The use of the computer and especially the internet has played a big role in the counseling. Many people especially the youth are using the internet frequently, and are ready to open up while chatting and express their feelings. Therefore, the internet provides a good opportunity to help those suffering and feeling lonely (Rochlen, Beretvas & Zack, 2004). The lonely people more so can find the chatting and emailing to be their lifeline. These kinds of people usually prefer this mode of communication. There are cases when a counselor can receive emails from a desperate person concerning the life they are going through, openly. However, the moment the counselor asks these people that they meet face to face, many stop communicating. Therefore, this shows how important these people take the internet communication (Rochlen, Beretvas & Zack, 2004).

There are many advantages that come with the use of the internet in counseling. First, since the people communicating do not see each other, the person will feel free to talk about their problems without holding back. This anonymity is what many people who are depressed seek to have while looking for the solution of their problems. Furthermore, a person may feel more comfortable receiving the counseling with a lot of privacy.

This can be attained in a person's house via the use of the internet. At many times, many people feel more comfortable when they write about their problems like in the emails or chatting, rather than verbally talking about them. This is a very important aspect as it will enable the counselor to be able to get all the required information from the patient, hence bringing the solution to the problems the patient is facing in a quicker way than having to wait until the time they have to talk.

The emails and chat transcripts are not immediately deleted, hence this can give a patient the chance of re-reading the communication they had with the counselor, making them to understand and take up what has been passed forward. Furthermore, there are other problems that are considered by the patient as being an embarrassment and they can not thus look the counselor in the eyes while talking. This can make the patient feel uncomfortable, and not be open with the problem. However, this cannot be the case in the emailing or chatting.

Despite these many advantages there are still many problems that are associated with using the internet counseling. First, there is a lot of information that can be collected by the counselor when they have face to face conversation which would be crucial in helping the patient (The Hastings Center Report, 2003). This is however not possible when there is internet communication. Furthermore, through the use of the internet, there are many chances of misunderstandings since seeking clarity is not possible as in having face to face communication.

In addition, there are just some problems that cannot be easily solved online, but it rather requires one to have a one on one conversation. Finally,

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although there is an assumption that there is confidentiality in the internet counseling, this is not 100% guaranteed. This is because of such cases as the internet sniffers who can be able to get some from the third party. Furthermore, not all professionals follow their professional ethics and they might thus end up giving the information related to the patients to a third party without the patients consent (The Hastings Center Report, 2003).

Therefore, before a client starts to take up online counseling, it is important that they are informed of the entire process, and the risks and advantages of having online counseling. This will help the clients to make informed decisions before starting the counseling.