

Webology, Volume 3, Number 3, September, 2006

Home	Table of Contents	Titles & Subject Index	Authors Index
----------------------	-----------------------------------	--	-------------------------------

Editorial Webotherapy and Beyond

[Alireza Noruzi](#), Ph.D., Editor-in-Chief

Introduction

Therapy-related services on the Internet and the Web are called by a variety of names, including Internet therapy, e-therapy, online therapy, e-counseling, web-counseling, and e-mail therapy. For the purposes of this note, the term '*webotherapy*' will be used.

The term '*webotherapy*' is coined for the use of web resources to effect a change in a person's thinking or behavior. The term '*webotherapy*' has been derived from '*bibliotherapy*'. Webotherapy can be defined as the use of web resources in the treatment of people with emotional problems or mental illness. It is a technique that uses web resources to help individuals resolve complex problems from physical disabilities to mental illness and to help clients cope with changes and challenges in their lives. Through fiction and non-fiction web resources clients can escape into new identities and roles and sample life-styles vicariously.

Through the use of assigned and shared readings, a variety of information can be conveyed, including new facts, different ways of approaching problems, and alternative ways of thinking about problems ([Griffin](#), 1984). Webotherapy can be used as a complement to face-to-face psychological treatment. The main goal of webotherapy is to broaden, strengthen and deepen the client's understanding of the particular problem that requires medical or psychiatric treatment.

The selection of appropriate web resources to be used in webotherapy is essential. They need to have creative answers to realistic problems of clients. Webotherapy uses thoughtfully chosen web resources (e.g. e-books and e-journals) to stimulate discussions about problems and possible solutions, and lead to awareness, greater insight and understanding. Webotherapy can help clients to recognize, feel and solve their problems. It can be more effective in conjunction with bibliotherapy. It is a collaborative process between clients and therapists. Webotherapy begins the discussion process by giving the client something to identify with, to reiterate that there is a way out of the situation, and that others have felt the way he or she does now. By using webotherapy, the client learns the processes of problem-solving which will help him or her with his or her own crises.

Webotherapy treatment incurs nominal cost of professional time in that therapist intervention can be reduced to as little as no contact at all during the initial phase of treatment. It offers a variety of different ways of interacting with the Internet and the Web, with its own advantages and disadvantages. It is likely that the use of webotherapy will continue to grow. However, webotherapy has not yet been fully described or evaluated in the literature.

Webotherapy has obvious value in that it provides the opportunity for the clients to understand and recognize themselves, their characteristics, and the complexity of human behavior and thought. Webotherapy can be useful for helping clients deal with emotional problems or minor adjustment problems or as a tool for helping clients meet developmental needs to promote personality growth and development. For example, it can be used with a child dealing with the divorce of his or her parents.

Stages of Webotherapy

The four stages of bibliotherapy (Joen, 1992) that readers must go through in order for bibliotherapy to be effective can be applied to webotherapy:

- a. identification, where readers recognize similarities between themselves and characters in the story and find commonalities with the main character, real or fictional as well as the events in the story;
- b. catharsis, where readers allow emotions and internal conflicts to rise to the surface and consciousness, becoming emotionally involved in the story with the main character;
- c. insight, where readers make the connection between the characters and themselves, and implicitly apply the story situation to their own life in various ways by developing possible solutions; and
- d. universalization, where readers understand that their problems are not unique and insoluble, and that they are capable of exploring different and effective methods for coping with them in order to reduce the feelings of difference and isolation.

Conclusion

Webotherapy can be selected as the primary treatment or as an adjunct to bibliotherapy with careful thought and caution. It can be used by many professionals including counselors, psychologist, psychiatrists, educators, and librarians. Webotherapists who wish to use webotherapy to help clients deal with problems must consider several factors (e.g., client's interest, age, reading ability and level of education, believability of the characters and literary merit, etc.) when selecting web resources for treatments. The problem the client is facing is the most important issue in the selection of web resources.

It can be concluded through webotherapy the clients have an opportunity to identify and to compensate a personal problem that they are aware of. Webotherapy is a great alternative for web users when traditional bibliotherapy is not accessible, if approached with appropriate caution. In sum, webotherapy is an adjunct to the therapeutic process with broad applications. It provides an excellent opportunity for those who are disabled or who live in rural and suburban areas. The use of webotherapy can improve the problem-solving abilities of clients by helping them express their feelings and resolve problems. In fact, webotherapy is getting the right web resource to the right client at the right time about the right problem.

References

- Griffin, B. (1984). *Special needs bibliotherapy/ Current books for/about children and young adults*. DeWitt, NY: Griffin.
- Jeon, K.W. (1992). Bibliotherapy for gifted children. *Gifted Child Today*, 15(6), 16-19.

Bibliographic information of this paper for citing:

Noruzi, A. (2006). "Editorial: Webotherapy and Beyond." *Webology*, 3(3), editorial 9.
Available at: <http://www.webology.org/2006/v3n3/editorial9.html>

Copyright © 2006, Alireza Noruzi.