



Consultation for a Digital World

What started out as a proposal for an international symposium eventually gave birth to a vibrant, ongoing and online consultation group. My colleague and I are both certified eating disorder specialists and approved supervisors and we share a desire to learn and to teach. Our collaboration in working on the proposal shed light on our wishes to continue to work together so every week for 9 months we met on Zoom and developed “Creativity & Countertransference: Cultivating the Healer’s Experience.” We originally designed an 8 week program and advertised to those who specialize in the treatment of eating disorders throughout the United States. Because we are working as consultants, we can conduct this work over state lines. As a novice in working in this capacity, I decided to take one of Zoom’s free classes to learn how to operate the system as a leader, which is vastly different than a participant. I gained confidence and discovered the ease to making our online consultation group intimate and effective. After the completion of the first 8 week series, the participants wanted to continue as a group indefinitely and the group became ongoing.

As co-leaders, we bring unique expertise, philosophies and therapeutic approaches to the group. The unification of somatic and psychoanalytic therapies provides a rich and cohesive blend for consulting with clinicians who primarily treat complex eating disorder manifestations. The boundaries and frame of a consultation group is both similar and different from a therapy group. We designed a consultation agreement that outlines the purpose, function and responsibilities of both the consultants and the consultantee. With that said, most of the process of the consultation group is geared toward clinical material from the participants, however, this is a group of people who work better together when there is a connection between the members. Inspiring the members to talk to one another can be challenging in an online format, so, sporadically we lead experiential exercises amongst the members which they can also use when working with their clients. Clinical case material is presented formally and informally, to provide both a systematic approach to consultation and an organic quality. We provide study materials each week via email that includes academic and journal articles relevant to psychoanalytic and somatic therapies, podcasts related to eating disorders, private practice, or newspaper columns. The study materials help inspire ideas, feelings or associations related to clinical work and personal experiences in the therapy situation. We invite participants to write to us any thoughts, feelings, reactions or experiences related to the group that may arise in between our consultation meetings. By aligning with these needs, this act provides the contact that is missed by not being in person with each other.

To keep the leaders’ relationship alive and well, we meet weekly on Zoom to discuss our reactions and thoughts about the previous group and how to integrate it for the following group process.

Our consultation group has been meeting for one year. We are very proud of our endeavor and in awe of each other. Not only have we forged a working relationship that involves disagreements, repairs and resolutions, we have enriched each other’s lives with our

friendship. Our intention is to provide an atmosphere that encourages self reflection and provides a growing body of knowledge regarding the craft of therapy.

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