

How Remote Therapy is Reaching People Who'd Never See a Therapist

With increasing waiting lists for mental health services, two new trends offer a solution. A single session of therapy via Skype is proving popular, and reaching the parts that conventional therapy doesn't reach.

May 31, 2015 (FPRC) -- Two major new trends are challenging conventional ideas about therapy. It can be brief; many clients now opt for a single session, and the client can 'meet' their therapist without even leaving home, via Skype.

Therapy is traditionally about regular visits to a counsellor in the privacy of the consulting room, often over months or even years. The intimacy was supposed to confer some special magic, and the commitment to regular sessions was seen as a requirement if the client was to progress.

Research now questions both these assumptions. Clinical psychologist Moshe Talmon, who pioneered Single Session Therapy (SST), was originally trained as a long-term therapist. He decided to research what happened to clients who apparently dropped out after their introductory session. His findings challenged the long-term view and led to his influential book, *Single Session Therapy*, in 1990.

When it comes to therapy, he says, "The most clear-cut conclusion is that more is not necessarily better."

Talmon's mould-breaking research blew away the cobwebs of tradition when he discovered that just one session is enough for up to 60% of people. Rather than something that was offered as a short term solution to a crisis, SST has, for 25 years, been accepted as the solution that best suits many people.

"It lets me feel in control", said Graham, a 55 year-old builder, "Regular therapy would make me feel dependent, in fact I'd never sign up to it. A single session means I'm getting what I need when I need it."

That these trends are happening at all in such a traditional field is surprising. What's more startling is just who it appeals to. It is not just young tech savvy professionals who slot a Skype therapy session into their busy day. Housebound mums and carers, and people whose state of health won't let them leave home are opening up this new way of getting the help and advice they need. Others simply prefer the convenience.

"For a long time I had put off getting help with a personal problem because I couldn't face driving into town after work, parking and all the rest", says Dionne, a financial services account manager. "With Skype therapy I simply log in to my appointment when I get home, no travel, no hassle."

Barry Winbolt is a brief therapist and trainer in personal development who started offering Skype Therapy out of necessity. "As I travel widely to my training events I was meeting people who wanted to consult me for therapy, but the distance made it impractical. Skype sessions mean that distance is no object, I can have conversations with clients from around the world".

And a single session? Can a single session of therapy really be effective? Winbolt is unequivocal “Yes, that’s what about half my clients tell me.” But he also cautions that is it’s not for everyone. “Some people still prefer that several sessions and face to face”, he says, “We have to do what works for our clients.”

With many mental health services and services struggling to cope with spiralling demand, these two new trends could be an answer worth exploring.

Contact Information

For more information contact Barry Winbolt of Barry Winbolt (<http://www.singleessiontherapy.com>)
+44 1323 895 220

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