

Media Review

Another Way Through the Two-Way Mirror: A Review of Psychotherapy.netJohn D. Guerry, *The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia*

Psychotherapy.net is an online magazine and video production company geared to a target audience of psychotherapy practitioners, educators, and trainees. At present, the Web site offers two “Netflix-style” video streaming subscription plans for individual use: (a) a “choice plan,” which allows access to two monthly videos for a fee of \$39 each month; and (b) an “unlimited plan” for \$79 monthly, which allows unlimited access to the full online library of over 200 training videos. Additionally, group streaming licenses and the sale of individual videos (in either DVD or online streaming formats) are available at variable cost. The primary strength of the Web site is the breadth of available psychotherapy training videos, which cover several major theoretical orientations, modalities, and clinical populations. However, the impressive capacity of psychotherapy.net to advance treatment dissemination and implementation efforts is limited by the current absence of information related to evidence-based practice recommendations.

PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET is billed as an online magazine and video production company for psychotherapy practitioners, educators, and trainees. The Web site offers free and for-purchase resources geared toward a broad target audience of “counselors, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, other mental health professionals, undergrad and grad students, nurses, professors, teachers, educational professionals, and anyone else interested in psychotherapy, counseling, and addictions work” (psychotherapy.net, n.d.a).

As stated on the Web site, the overarching mission of psychotherapy.net is to “inspire psychotherapists of all stripes and orientations” (psychotherapy.net, n.d.b, para. 1). This mission is chiefly operationalized through the provision of paid access to over 200 professional training videos, available in either DVD or online streaming formats. For individual practitioners, the video library aims to facilitate improvement of psychotherapy skills, largely through recordings of expert clinicians conducting psychotherapy and discussing their interventions. Additionally, psychotherapy.net publishes a free, monthly “online magazine.” This introduces new online content in the form of articles and blogs submitted by contributors from within the international mental health community, transcripts of interviews conducted with expert (and often well-known) mental health practitioners and clinical

scientists, and—to add a touch of levity—psychotherapy-themed cartoons drawn by the Web site’s founder and CEO, Victor Yalom.

As mentioned above, in addition to individual DVDs for purchase, psychotherapy.net currently offers a wide selection of training videos through a user-friendly online streaming portal. While costs may change, at this writing two video subscription plans are available for individual use: (a) a “choice plan,” which allows access to two new videos a month for a monthly fee of \$39; and (b) an “unlimited plan,” which allows instant, unlimited access to the full video library for \$79 a month. The Web site additionally advertises the sale of group licenses for teaching, training, and institutionwide use that grant the right, in perpetuity, to use videos in a particular class or throughout an organization. As advertised online, group licenses include an instructor’s manual consisting of such educational materials as video transcripts of dialogue, questions for classroom discussion, and active role-play exercises. The costs of institutional licenses are not currently published online; instead, psychotherapy.net invites interested parties to contact their customer service department directly (customerservice@psychotherapy.net; 800-577-4762) for information about pricing.

Importantly, psychotherapy.net has been approved by various national associations to provide online continuing education (CE) credits to a range of licensed mental health professionals, including psychologists (American Psychological Association; APA), social workers (Association of Social Work Boards), certified counselors (National Board of Certified Counselors), and addiction counselors (Association for Addiction Professionals). For a full list of CE approvals, visit <http://www.psychotherapy.net>.

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[net/ce-approvals-list](#). The process to earn CE credits through psychotherapy.net involves (a) watching a DVD, streaming a video, or reading an online article or interview transcript; (b) successfully passing an online test, and (c) printing a CE certificate. At the time of this writing (May 23, 2015), the Web site offered 203 video CE courses and 140 article/interview courses.

Background

The lineage and evolution of psychotherapy.net as an educational Web site are remarkable and, in essence, run parallel to the principles of its pedagogy. The site was founded in 1995 by psychologist Victor Yalom, son of the eminent psychiatrist and author, Irvin Yalom. The younger Yalom described how he had felt fortunate to have studied psychotherapy from his mentor, James Bugental, himself a prominent psychotherapist and one of the founding fathers of existential-humanistic psychotherapy. Yalom recounted how he was inspired to “preserve [Dr. Bugental’s] work for future generations of therapists” and thus videotaped his mentor conducting live psychotherapy sessions (V. Yalom, personal communication, April 30, 2015).

Shortly thereafter, psychotherapy.net was created as an online platform to facilitate the production and distribution of the Bugental videos and the many other psychotherapy training videos that would follow. Yalom explained both the impetus and imperative for developing the Web site:

Unlike almost every other profession, [psychotherapy] students rarely have a chance to view mentors or teachers actually engaging in psychotherapy. Watching master psychotherapists in action on video is probably the next best thing. The opportunity to view actual sessions, and to hear leading experts discuss their thoughts behind their interventions is invaluable. Videos also capture the critical nonverbal aspects of therapy, including body language, facial expression, tone of voice, and the rhythm of the therapist–client interaction. As I am fond of saying, “you just can’t learn psychotherapy from a book.” (Yalom, n.d., para. 3).

The media format through which psychotherapy.net delivered their growing library of training videos evolved in stride with contemporary technology. Video titles were initially recorded and distributed by mail via VHS videotape cassettes and subsequently transitioned to DVD format. In 2013, psychotherapy.net launched an online video streaming service. Although streaming subscriptions were initially limited to universities and other institutions for training purposes, in 2014 the Web

site expanded these services to its current format. Complementing the sale of group streaming licenses for institutional use, the Web site now offers “Netflix-style” subscriptions to individual customers interested in gaining access to the online library of over 200 training videos (V. Yalom, personal communication, April 30, 2015).

The training videos offered by psychotherapy.net are either produced by the company or licensed through other outlets. Yalom described the process of how videos are selected for production. He, in consultation with his wife, Marie-Helene Yalom (who serves as chief operating officer), decides which videos to produce based on several criteria. While leaders in the field are featured as “hosts” of videos whenever possible, lesser known (but no less skilled) clinician–educators are often enlisted. Yalom, who places a premium on coverage of the major theoretical orientations, modalities, and clinical populations, also selects new videos to produce or license based on existing gaps in the psychotherapy.net catalogue (i.e., “There are always areas to expand into”).

After a particular topic area has been identified, Yalom deeply involves himself in decisions related to the format of videos produced directly by psychotherapy.net. These decisions hinge on how particular psychotherapy skills or techniques might best be depicted for teaching and training purposes. According to Yalom, while most formats involve actual therapy demonstrations, others, such as case consultation and interviews with major luminaries in the field, are equally instructive (V. Yalom, personal communication, April 30, 2015). A salient example of this latter format is the popular video interview with Aaron T. Beck (<http://www.psychotherapy.net/video/aaron-beck-cognitive-therapy>), who reflects upon his career while offering insights into the transformation of modern psychology over the last century.

Notably, psychotherapy.net has begun to expand their existing video archive by moving beyond single-session video demonstrations into titles and series that are explicitly designed to “break down” and teach specific skills and techniques in clinical work. This change is reminiscent of a larger movement in the field to pivot efforts from the wholesale dissemination of specific, “branded,” empirically supported treatment packages to the broader translation of core competencies or empirically supported principles of change across interventions (e.g., Chorpita, Becker, & Daleiden, 2008; Rosen & Davison, 2003). Yalom characterized psychotherapy.net’s four-part video series *Motivational Interviewing Step by Step*, and another upcoming series entitled *Emotionally Focused Therapy Step by Step*, as illustrative examples of this newer format (V. Yalom, personal communication, April 30, 2015).

Psychotherapy.net is not, of course, the only available online outlet for the production and distribution of

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