

# International Association for Counselling's Counselling Practitioners' Round Table *"Sharing practice around the world"*

---



## Counselling Practitioners' Round Table April 11, 2020 Meeting Agenda

- I. Introductions
- II. IAC updates
- III. Discussion points on Counseling Practice
- IV. Plans for CPRT

### I. Introductions & Updates

- All participants were asked to please share: 1) your name, 2) your location, 3) what have been your tools for coping with the 'shelter in place' orders
  - **Nate Perron**- lives in New Hampshire, USA, but clinical assistant professor at Northwestern University teaching counseling out of Chicago, IL, USA; has a small private practice in the town in NH where he lives; having more time to connect with his wife and kids has been a blessing out of a difficult time
  - **Roberta Neault**- lives in Vancouver, BC, Canada; lovely time of year to be home in Vancouver; lives near UBC, and enjoys opportunity to teach face-to-face there after many years of teaching online for other universities but now transitioning UBC courses online as well; President for Life Strategies Ltd.; she and her Life Strategies team are volunteering to help IAC offer e-learning opportunities to IAC members and are also supporting the newsletter team; appreciating the chance to not travel lately; feeling it to be a blessing to have a time to pause
  - **Desiree Carlson**- originally from Mexico but now lives in Vancouver; she does practice Gestalt therapy, and continues to have a counseling practice online; coping with this situation has been no major change; she has been homeschooling her kids during that time; she has been staying very busy as well
  - **Sandy Kakacek**- lives in Chicago, IL, USA. Teaches as a professor in Chicago and provides therapy; she has been learning how to offer telehealth in new ways; all classes she teaches are online; she is also taking a class to enhance her certification in hypnosis in counseling
  - **Sudha Nagarajan**- lives in Princeton, NJ, USA, but originally from India; she is in the suburban part of NJ so she is feeling safe; people are out and walking but people are respecting everyone else's space overall; she has a private practice

that is now virtual as well; using Doxy.me as an online platform; she was scheduled to go to India in March to see her father of 90, but she had to cancel due to the pandemic responses; she knows this was the best decision she made, but they are all staying connected by singing songs as a family and enjoying time online with one another

- **Laurie Persh**- lives in the Washington, DC area, USA; she has been a therapist for about 40 years and has been involved with IAC for about 3 years; she was present in Canada during the elections and helped facilitate that process; now she has become more involved in IAC; although in the past she has been involved in AHMCA, ACA, Maryland counseling chapters, and other local organizations around counseling; she believes she and her family are a microcosm of what is happening around the world; she misses her grandkids terribly and they have been Facetimeing; she has been sleeping better knowing that bingeing on TV is not that great so she has tried to focus on increasing sleep; she is recognizing that ethical dilemmas for people in counseling have been prominent; she is not taking new patients with online counseling currently, but she is continuing with current clients at this time; she is not volunteering in person to support as she normally would because her own health could be compromised and she would not want to affect her grandkids negatively eventually
- **Beatriz Brinkman**- lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina; involved with IAC since 1998; she is currently retired but she continues to work; she remains at home because she belongs to the high risk population; she just finished chemotherapy in March; there have been a lot of virtual meetings, and on March 13 she had a big family meeting she was able to enjoy; in Buenos Aires they are not allowed to go out, so many people are helping by bringing her food; her regular work involves supporting the elderly by encouraging movement activities
- **Ilya Zakharov**- lives in Moscow, Russia; he works in a local hospital, so he continues to have to go regularly into work; they just are not having groups engage at this time but otherwise he continues offering counseling services as usual; the best thing he can do is deal with some things they have not done before; because of quarantine he is meeting with some people online when he cannot talk with them directly
- **Lisa Pisani**- lives in Vermont, USA; they have about 6 inches of snow so it feels like the middle of December; she works with a private practice, and works with those in palliative care with those who are very ill; this has been difficult with offering support; she is very busy with working in this vulnerable group; people are not close by so going outside is generally not an issue; now she is meeting with everyone on telehealth; she looks forward to coming to Malaysia in the future if the conference is postponed; she looks to be focused on a new exercise routine
- **Anita Jones**- lives in south central Idaho, USA; she has met many of those present in the CPRT, and she has been in IAC for several years; she teaches with Boise State University, and everything went online recently, although she was already working with a hybrid course online before; she does critical care

incidents with a local organizations, and she also works with the court system; she finds herself traveling across state lines and going into people's homes often, so this has been a concern about possibly bringing back the virus to her family; one thing she's been enjoying is that she and her husband have spent more time together than since the beginning of their 40-year marriage; this has been an interesting observation, and she has been staying more connected with children as well, video chatting, etc.

- **Jane Webber**- lives in NJ, USA, about 15 miles from New York City. Her daughter Julia is 37-years old and is staying with her at this time; she works at Kean University, which has now gone online as well; most of her students are having to deal with a very difficult time with loved ones sick of the coronavirus; she has a blended family, so they do both Passover and Easter but will be doing this online this year. Her younger sister in Ohio sends a picture of their family every day, which has been nice. The hardest for her right now is that her husband (who also works at Kean University) is in the hospital in critical condition in the ICU, and her son is also located at the same hospital working. She and her daughter still have been fine, and she is currently free of the virus currently; Jane expressed her gratitude to be among the group today

## II. IAC Updates

- **2020 conference updates**- the [IAC website](#) has all details about the conference postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - Discussed the tendency to meet regularly at conferences to discuss themes
  - No focus would be placed on the conference at this time because it is postponed with no definite date of reschedule. More to come on this.
- **IAC initiatives**- IAC is facilitating a number of initiatives to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants present were asked to share:
  - **Desiree Carlson** reported on the upcoming support group that is available for anyone in IAC. If you are a member it is free, and others are only \$10. This may be found on the IAC Facebook page
  - **Laurie Persh** indicated that **Desiree** also has been very involved in the ambassadors program that is rolling out soon. They will be having a meeting for regional ambassadors in a few weeks. Agenda items will be helpful to share among support groups, where we can encourage counselors to be sure and connect. They are considering ways for members to join IAC, even considering ways to help those who cannot afford it at the moment. If you are interested in the ambassador program please keep your eyes open for more details.
  - **Roberta Neault** also shared there are preparations for an introductory IAC course for transcultural counseling that can learn from and support counselors in different parts of the world, to share insights for cultural-related concerns and nuances to consider when working across cultures, at home or abroad

- **Volunteer opportunities-** CPRT members are encouraged to explore volunteer opportunities on the [IAC website](#)
  - Please be sure to connect with IAC for volunteer opportunities
  - **Nate Perron** shared that Naoise Kelly is the CEO of IAC, and he is always happy to connect further with people about details, although **Desiree Carlson** is the volunteer chair for IAC, and she indicated she would be happy to connect with people about opportunities as well

### III. Discussion points on Counseling Practice

- **Coronavirus (COVID-19) response from counseling professionals world-wide. Prompt questions included:**
  - How are you managing during the current pandemic?
  - What has been the professional counseling response in your community?
- **Laurie** indicated that living in Washington, DC area, people are coming around to the fact that mental health is a very important topic. People are starting to experience some emotional fallout. Professional listservs are blowing up with discussion around training and support, but it is very disjointed and chaotic. This is not as coordinated as we would like to see it more organized
- **Beatriz** indicated she has a colleague that works with kids but she has not been able to meet with them currently; this has been difficult
- **Sandy** indicated that she usually uses animals outside with animal-assisted therapy, and she works through activities in counseling and they have a dog they would use for self-care; for a client that is 10, she needed to be creative with how to work with the young person online; she has been engaging in creative therapy by using telehealth anyway with having guided discussion around engaging their animals (dog, horse, etc.) over the internet. She has a wonderful representative, Laurie Underwood, who has been a wonderfully proactive mental health practitioner, who has been able to offer online support
- **Roberta** indicated that a young family member has recently migrated from face-to-face sessions to working online with an educational psychologist – they have found ways to continue working effectively online, taking breaks as needed, but gradually working up to 50 minute sessions at a time.
- **Desiree Carlson** indicated that her kids continue to connect with her mom using different tools to engage with young people using the Houseparty app with her kids. These online tools have been wonderful to utilize in relationships, but also in counseling for some
- **Jane** has been delighted to find you can do play with kids online. Of course parents and kids cannot be in person, so the parent is now involved with having them participate with play therapy as assistants that help the counselor with tracking the play therapy. It is exciting to support people in therapy online. Sometimes the parents have found they can play a new special role

- **Nate** shared his clinical practice focuses on support with law enforcement and with kids, despite being quite different categories; this has been an interesting transition to engage young people online; he has often used collaborative gaming in session, so he has been using a number of opportunities to engage in a similar way, such as tic-tac-toe on a shared Google doc
- **Anita** was glad to hear this discussion has moved to discussing children, because she has been doing work with families onsite, and she knows that kids as young as 3 are coming out with words such as coronavirus. This is a bit sad to see, and makes her recall when the Iraq war was taking place, her own son (who is now 20) shut the bedroom door and said, “we have to keep the war out.” In the same way today, kids are being exposed to the horrors of COVID-19 without an ability to process their experiences.
- **Sudha** just indicated she just learned about a free book available for kids regarding COVID-19 on one of the professional counseling listservs. **Sandy** also recalled there was a coloring book available for the same population
- **Jane** also shared that her husband, Barry’s, mother (her husband) is 100 years old and she is doing well. She currently does not even leave her home, but she has been able to learn how to use FaceTime during this time. She will benefit from some of the ways of interacting that were discussed today
- **Roberta** indicated that on behalf of the IAC newsletter, she would love to have people provide further information. It would be wonderful to have a sentence from each person to share in the newsletter about how counselors around the world are responding to the Covid 19 crisis; this could be encouraging and inspiring for others. She has gathered some wonderful ideas with how to proceed today during the CPRT meeting as well
- **Laurie** indicated she has also learned some aspects of play to provide online, along with other approaches such as mindfulness. One area has been to have kids look around the room, describe a scene (how much can they remember), tap into the sense of sight and engage all the rest of the 5 senses. She can get kids to stand up and engage in Simon Says or other thoughtfulness exercises. Laurie is also noticing that in the Capital the listservs can be chaotic, but they can be very helpful to have people offer their input along the way as well. It is important for some counselors to know how support is coming for counselors that they will experience
- **Jane** observed that between NY and NJ it is between 2 different worlds. NJ has a crisis response counselor license that exists for licensed professionals in general. The crisis support is working together to connect with first responders and give them 2-minute breaks by checking in on the phone or discussing deep breathing
- **Lisa** felt this information is fantastic that would be helpful to provide first responders the kind of supports that will help provide breaks for first responders. People are just now starting to recognize the importance of counselors and mental health, but we’re not fully there yet.
- **Beatriz** indicated that the economic situation in Argentina is much worse at this time, which was beginning even before the coronavirus. All counselors are in private practice, so they do not make any money if they do not see online clients. Much of Argentine

economy is on the black market, and the government has shut down for this time. It will ultimately be an experiment to see how the government responds.

- **Sudha** shared that in India the economic disparities are extremely vast. Many migrant workers suddenly lost their jobs as companies stopped operating due to the pandemic. Having no daily wages meant that they cannot feed themselves so there was a mass exodus as they tried to find ways to go back to their villages with little or no transportation.
- **Anita** wanted to bring up another major issue that is domestic violence has the opportunity to increase significantly during such a stressful time.
- **Roberta** indicated that single parents are also needing extra resources at this time. For example, it is common advice during these times of physical distancing to not take kids into a grocery store, but if you are a single parent with young children, you may have no choice. Single parents are faced with very difficult circumstances

### Summary of CPRT Themes

1. **Sudha** indicated that counseling is very important right now. Although it is coming in a different mentality and format it remains highly important
    - a. Important for counselors to know the support groups are available
  2. **Anita** shared the different ethical dilemmas that exist can be managed, and thinking through ways to support those issues will be important
    - a. Insurance issues continue to arise. More participation by counseling professionals in these issues will be important
  3. **Sudha** emphasized that licensing portability remains a concern at this time regarding support inside the USA;
    - a. **Sandy** indicated portability is being offered across boundaries for a limited time with approval from the US government;
    - b. **Laurie** reported it will be important to consider points of approval will be needed in order to preserve the profession
    - c. For what we need, this can encourage us to not give up and be creative in the support we offer
  4. There has now been much more attention on e-learning, along with how to teach online or meet clients online. Clarifying the thoughtfulness about taking courses on line will be an important approach to consider. We can share what has or has not worked along the way
  5. Working with children presents some unique challenges. While some have canceled sessions with children in particular, others have been able to engage in meaningful ways to engage young people online. Many helpful ideas were shared regarding how to engage kids in meaningful ways online.
- **Previous CPRT discussions:** These were not addressed directly as normal from the previous meeting, but these can be resumed at the next meeting
    - Counseling children and adolescents
    - Counseling families through palliative care

## IV. Plans for CPRT

- No additional plans were addressed at this time:
  - Proposals submitted? More details to come regarding what will take place with proposals
  - Next meetings in 2020? Meetings be explored via e-mailed in the upcoming weeks

## Group Portrait

