BIBLIOTHERAPY & WEBOTHERAPY: READING RESOURCE FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

S. Barathi[1] & D. Sindhuja[2] and Dr. V. R. Rajan[3]
[1&2] Research Scholar, AMET University, Chennai
[3] Research Supervisor, AMET University, Chennai

Abstract

Bibliotherapy, or book therapy, involves the systematic use of books to help people cope with their mental, physical, emotional, developmental or social problems. The etymology of the term bibliotherapy (biblio-is the Greek word for books and, therapycomes from therapeia, meaning to help medically) aligns bibliotherapy together with some other similar practices, such as art therapy, dance therapy, music therapy, play therapy, etc. Bibliotherapy can help an individual to understand that he or she is not the first or the only one to face a specific problem or challenge. Other important goals of bibliotherapy include: relieving emotional or mental pressure; developing an individual's self-concept; communicating new values and attitudes with regard to the problem; and providing clients with alternative solutions to the problem.

Keywords: *Bibliotherapy, stress, isolation, Webotherapy, addictive behaviour , low self-esteem, learning, disabilities, family relationships, death and loss, grief and bereavement*

Who can benefit from Bibliotherapy?

Bibliotherapy is used with people of all ages –children, young adults, adults and seniors. Recent studies on bibliotherapy show that it could be successfully implemented to help individuals to deal with a wide range of physical, psychological, emotional and social issues, such as:

- physical health problems and disabilities (chronic and life-threatening illnesses)
- general mental health problems (anxiety and fears, depression)
- stress
- isolation
- addictive behaviour (alcohol and drug addiction)
- low self-esteem
- learning disabilities
- family relationships (divorce, single parents, siblings, adoption)
- death and loss
- grief and bereavement

Definitions of webo therapy

Web therapy is the employment of web resources, e-books and e-journals and the reading of them in the treatment of mental and nervous diseases and disorders. Web therapy or "internet therapy" is the modern alternative to bibliotherapy self-help treatments Briefly, webotherapy is: healing through web resources;

- reading web resources, e-books and e-journals to solve and better understand personal problems; and
- mutual sharing of literature to structure interaction between a facilitator and a participant to facilitate personal development or problem resolution through web resources.

Multiple terms found in the literature virtually synonymous with the concept of web therapy are web counseling, web guidance, web psychology, web therapeutics, e-therapy, internet therapy, online therapy, e-mail therapy, and cybertherapy. However, reading through several different articles about internet therapy (e-therapy), it is immediately evident that different authors use the same term to describe different activities with different kinds of clients.

The purposes of webo therapy

Many of us may use web resources and web therapy for various reasons:

- to help us make important personal decisions;
- to provide information about problems, diseases, etc.;
- to provide insight into problems and stimulate discussion about possible solutions;
- to create an awareness that there are alternatives and to take advantage of the ways that others have dealt with similar problems;
- to find an online family counselor; or
- to consult an online psychologist

Therapists and counselors can prescribe webotherapy, through stories of life transformation, to their clients as a way of coping with problems, understanding that others have overcome similar life situations (disorders or problems), and learning new skills. Web resources can educate the client about the problem or disorder itself or be used to increase the client's understanding and acceptance of a proposed treatment and to promote a stronger sense of personal responsibility for health care.

Benefits of webo therapy and bibliotherapy

Web therapy may help the client to develop insight into his or her problems and it encourages the verbalization of problems. It serves as an indirect communication channel between the client and the web therapist. If the client realizes that his or her problems are not unique, it may reduce his or her feelings of isolation. Web therapy has many practical advantages; among these are easy access to a wide variety of online resources, flexibility in application to various settings, and use with a range of problems and clients

Web therapy also has the potential to serve people with limited mobility, physical disability, time restrictions, and limited access to mental health services (Rochlen et al., 2004). Patients living in remote areas, physically disabled patients with restricted mobility,

or patients who are reluctant to seek face-to-face therapy because of anxiety or fear of stigmatization may be reached through the web (Lange et al., 2003).

The benefits of bibliotherapy that are most frequently mentioned by experienced therapists, which are really the benefits of web therapy:

- provides a window – increases awareness of and empathetic understanding for other cultures, lifestyles and lived experiences;
- provides a mirror – increases appreciation of, pride in and identification with one's own ethnic/cultural identity;
- promotes coping skills;
- provides information and alternatives;
- stimulates discussion of feelings and ideas;
- increases enjoyment of literature and reading; and
- enhances insight and integration.

Stages of webo therapy

Web therapy consisting of four stages:

- Identification of the client's needs, emotions and issues.
- Selection of appropriate web resources that directly address the client's socio emotional difficulties, that allow the client to identify personally with the source's main character, and that provide correct information about a presenting problem . The selection process takes skill and insight, as the web resources must provide correct information about a problem while not imparting a false sense of hope.
- Presentation of web resources carefully and strategically so that the client is able to see similarities between himself or herself and the characters in the selected resources, and applying the technique through developmentally appropriate strategies by holding

Discussions with the client by asking the following questions:

- What is the story about?
- How does the story make you feel?
- Who is the main character?
- What problem did the main character encounter?
- How did the main character solve the problem?
- If you faced a similar problem, what might you do? (Sullivan and Strang, 2003).
  These discussions provide therapists with the opportunity to determine whether the client adequately understands the selection's message; and
- Follow-up of the client after reading the resources (e.g. retelling of the story, analyzing decisions of characters, role-playing, creative problem-solving, discussing

right and wrong, morals, the strong and weak points of the main character, resolving the story in a different way), encouraging the client to think about how he or she relates to the self. Each ofthese stages must be carefully considered by the therapist.

The main criteria to select a web resource are as follows:

- the web resource should offer useful content on the problem area covered;
- the web resource should focus on one or more of the clinical or psychological topics covered in the work; and
- the web resource should be clearly appropriate to the implementation of the webo therapeutic process

Types of web therapy

Based on the types of bibliotherapy, there are three types of web therapy. Whichever approach it involves, web therapy requires careful planning.

Developmental

Developmental web therapy involves helping clients in their normal health and development. In clinical web therapy, skilled practitioners use web therapeutic methods to help individuals experiencing serious emotional and behavioral problems. It is defined as the use of literature and facilitative processes by skilled mental health or medical clinicians in meeting a deliberate therapeutic goal for the purpose of assisting individuals in dealing with severe disorders and traumatic life experiences (Pehrsson and McMillen, 2006b).

Interactive

In interactive webotherapy, participants engage in activities that help them reflect on what they read, such as group discussion and dialogue journal writing (Palmer et al.,)1997.

Discussion

An advantage of webotherapy materials is their accessibility. They can be delivered and distributed through the e-mail, discussion groups, web pages and weblogs. The web, especially the weblog, is one of the means used to purge emotions, heal or comfort each other, writer (blogger) and reader alike Webotherapy can be used as an adjunct to individual or group therapy and is a form of self-administered treatment in which web resources provide a means of self-improvement or help to alleviate distress, to increase awareness and enhance lifestyle changes.

Conclusion

Webotherapy is a suitable way to learn new skills in problem-solving, coping and troubleshooting. It promotes spirituality and self-help and leads to mutual help. It is worth noting that a single web therapeutic session is not sufficient to effect real change in clients. Therefore, a variety of follow-up activities can be used to help clients bridge the

gap between their readings and personal application to their own lives. Web therapists can establish online discussion groups and newsgroups to be used by clients with mental disorders, providing access for clients to state their questions or comments and receive replies from other clients or health care professionals.

Web therapy has a broad range of applications with individuals of all ages, and is used for health maintenance, and among populations requiring treatment for various situations (addicts, adolescents, families with problems, the learning disabled, the elderly, the physically challenged, and survivors of violence, abuse and incest). However, since web therapy cannot be used with all clients, for all purposes, or in all settings, practitioners must be selective in its use. The therapist must be aware of the limitations of the web therapeutic approach. Inevitably, responses to web therapy differ from client to client. Consequently, every user needs his or her web resource. In addition, future studies need to compare web therapy interventions with traditional generally face-to-face bibliotherapeutic approaches in order to determine whether web therapy approaches.

References

- Afolayan, J.A. (1992), "Documentary perspective of bibliotherapy in education", Reading Horizons, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 137-48.
- Andersson, G., Strömgren, T., Ström, L. and Lyttkens, L. (2002), "Randomized controlled trial of Internet-based cognitive behavior therapy for distress associated with tinnitus", Psychosomatic Medicine, Vol. 64 No. 5, pp. 810-6.
- Campbell, R. (1989), Psychiatric Dictionary, 6th ed., Oxford University Press, New York,
- Cottrell, S. (2005), "E-therapy: the future?", Healthcare Counselling & Psychotherapy . Journal, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 18-21.
- Cronje, K.B. (1993), "Bibliotherapy in Seventh-Day Adventist education using the information media for character development", International Faith and Learning Seminar, Helderberg College, Somerset West, November/December, available at: http://www.aiias.edu/ict/vol_12/12cc_049-066.htm
- Eysenbach, G. and Diepgen, T.L. (1998a), "Responses to unsolicited patient email requests for medical advice on the world wide web", Journal of the American Medical Association, Vol. 280, pp. 1333-5.
- Griffiths, M. (2005), "Online therapy for addictive behaviors", Cyberpsychology & Behavior, Vol. 8 No. 6, pp. 555-61.
- Grohol, J.M. (2000), The Insider's Guide to Mental Health Resources Online, Guilford Press, New York, NY.
- Hayati Abdullah, M. (2002), "Bibliotherapy", Digest Number 177, ERIC Digests (073), available at: http://www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/digests/d177.html

- King, S.A. and Moreggi, D. (1998), "Internet therapy and self help groups – the pros and cons", in Gackenbach, J. (Ed.), Psychology and the Internet: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and Transpersonal Implications, Academic Press, San Diego, CA, pp. 77-109, available at: http://webpages.charter.net/stormking/Chapter5/index.html
- Kirk, M.A. (1997), "Current perceptions of counseling and counselor education in cyberspace", Counseling Today, Vol. 39 No. 7, pp. 17-18.
- Morawski, C.M. and Gilbert, J.N. (2000), "Developmental interactive bibliotherapy", College Teaching, Vol. 48 No. 3, pp. 108-14.
- Noruzi, A. (2006), "Webotherapy and beyond", Webology, Vol. 3 No. 3, Editorial 9, available at: http://www.webology.ir/2006/v3n3/editorial9.html
- Pehrsson, D.E. and McMillen, P. (2005), "A bibliotherapy evaluation tool: grounding counsellors in the therapeutic use of literature", The Arts in Psychotherapy, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 47-59.
- Pehrsson, D.E. and McMillen, P. (2006a), "Bibliotherapy Education Project", January 18, available at: http://bibliotherapy.library.oregonstate.edu
- Wantland, D.J., Portillo, C.J., Holzemer, W.L., Slaughter, R. and McGhee, E.M. (2004), "The effectiveness of web-based vs. non-web-based interventions: a meta-analysis of behavioural change outcomes", Journal of Medical Internet Research, Vol. 6 No. 4, e40, available at: http://www.jmir.org/2004/4/e40/
- Zuckerman, E. (2003), "Finding, evaluating, and incorporating Internet self-help resources into psychotherapy practice", Journal of Clinical Psychology, Vol. 59 No. 2, pp. 217-25.