

Middle East Member Care

NETWORK NEWS #23

Spring, 2011

Distance counseling: what does that mean? It is defined by the use of technology (synchronous and/or asynchronous means) as a delivery method to assist clients to function with, or grow toward, increased wellness in their personal and professional lives (Malone, 2007). Synchronous technology could include: "chat," "instant messaging," telephone and video/voice calls (such as [Skype](#)). Asynchronous means include: email, listservs, blogs, social/professional networks, websites, etc.

When the Israelite children complained about not having meat to eat, the Lord told Moses to *get ready... I'll give them meat!* When Moses questioned the practicality of such a promise, God responded, *"Is My arm too short?"* Later, while God had physical arms, He told His disciples that those who have faith will do *"even greater things [than I have done]... because I'm going to the Father"* (John 14:12). There are various interpretations as to what those "greater things" might be today.

I would suggest that at least one idea pertains to the advent and Kingdom use of **technology and the internet**. Jesus was bound by physical realities while on earth, reaching only a few or at most a few thousand at one time. Today, while the internet has facilitated a tsunami of pornography and other sins, there remains a redeeming value in reaching the masses around the globe with help and hope for living.

When I was completing my master's degree at [Loyola](#) in the mid-1990's there was discussion of a "new thing" called **"online counseling."** We scoffed (myself included!); questioning what good could come of counseling which was not at "arm's reach." At that time, there were only a few mental health practitioners charging for their online services. Today, a quick "google search" of "online therapists" produces more than 6 million hits. The [Huffington Post](#) recently called "telemedicine" the "sleeping elephant" and the "next big thing" in the delivery of medical/health care.

With the flood of online therapists and the potential for abuse, organizations such as the [International Society for Mental Health Online \(ISMHO\)](#), the [National Board for Certified Counselors \(NBCC\)](#), and the [American Counseling Association \(ACA\)](#) have established ethical guidelines and principles for distance counseling. NBCC has established education and experience requirements for training and attainment of **"Distance Credentialed Counselor" (DCC)**.

Personally, I have changed my tune since grad school. I believe there is a place for the careful and thoughtful use of technology to deliver counseling services, especially in under-served parts of the globe. I have been providing coaching services online for more than 3 years, but now have joined ISMHO, and have recently earned NBCC's **"Distance Credentialed Counselor" (DCC)**. Technology/internet can have redeeming value in providing various levels of membercare services for "cross-cultural Christian workers" in isolated areas. Our "counseling arm" need not be *too short*.



I wonder if you have ever taken advantage of online/distance counseling? And, if you haven't, would you... if it were available? Feel free to respond to my secure email account: thgray@hushmail.com. —Dr. Thomas Gray

References

- Anthony, K. and Nagel, D. (2010). *Therapy online: A practical guide*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Malone, J.F. (2007). 'Understanding Distance Counseling', in J. Malone, R. Miller, & G. Walz (eds.), *Distance counseling: Expanding the counselor's reach and impact*. Ann Arbor: Counseling Outfitters.

Distance Member Care Services

Tom Gray is offering distance member care and clinical supervision services via Skype and secure/ encrypted email. He is a licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC) and national board-certified (NCC) in the U.S.; and a distance credentialed counselor (DCC/NBCC); as well as a certified life coach. He holds a M.S. in Pastoral Counseling from Loyola, and is a PhD candidate in "Counseling Education & Supervision" at Regent University.

Tom is ordained with more than 25 years of pastoral ministry experience, including 7 years of m-work in the Middle East. He has provided training and clinical counseling internationally since 2000; and was a featured presenter at last year's M.E. MC Network conference

As a trained "distance credentialed counselor" Tom is passionate about providing quality, affordable member care and clinical supervision/consulting services to workers and care-givers in remote under-served areas.

For more information, contact Tom directly at:
thgray@hushmail.com.



Other Opportunities: Re-entry and Renewal Retreats:

- 4 in USA, including May 30-June 3, August 1-5, October 17-21 in Joplin, MO. The cost is \$395 per adult. For more information, call Mark at (417)621-8962 or visit <http://www.traininternational.com>.
- 2 personal retreat opportunities in UK. Go to www.oscar.org.uk/service/pastoral/courses.htm and www.oscar.org.uk/service/logistics/comingtoug/holidays.htm#retreat
- Egypt TCK conference, Nov. 4-7, 2011. Write to adrienne@a2bmail.net