



Focus on the Future

Guest Predictions: Bernadette Durkin

Guest Predictions is a regular feature in which we ask leaders in a number of professions questions that affect us all.

Bernadette Durkin, Cedarstone Counseling Center, Leesburg, VA.

I am a Virginia Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), with a psychotherapy practice in Leesburg, VA. I see adults both individually and couples. My focus of treatment disorders is: depression, anxiety, life conflicts and addictive behaviors. I have been a Social Worker since 1969 and a licensed Psychotherapist since 1993, having worked in Community Mental Health, as well as Private inpatient and outpatient facilities.

Q: What do you see as the key emerging uses of the internet for Social Work?

A: Due to patient confidentiality, I use the internet for research in treatment and resources, but for these uses, the internet is powerful.

Q: What surprising applications of the Internet have you found in Social Work?

A: Oftentimes patients seek treatment because they have found or been found to be addicted to online dependent and abusive behaviors such as gambling, impulsive spending, extra-relational affairs or pornography.

Q: What have been the “Best Uses” of the Internet for you?

A: The “Best Uses” would be research. I receive several professional print journals, but find that belonging to professional online groups that produce up to date clinical research is invaluable. I can also quickly check medication side effects that may be contributing to adverse patient behavior. I have also found that for anxious patients, who fear speaking on the phone or face to face, the internet is more comfortable to use.

Q: What should be avoided when dealing with the Internet?

A: Although the internet is a remarkable tool for communication and organization, I find that from a therapeutic perspective, the instantaneous availability discourages reflection and encourages impulsive reactions.

Q: Which next steps might you recommend for all of us to take?

A: Use the internet as a positive tool for communication, information, organization, but be careful about what is put out there for all to see, especially on social media over which one may have little control. Make it a positive tool in one’s life and in the universe in general.