

The Therapeutic Value of Blogging by Adolescents Suffering From Social Difficulties

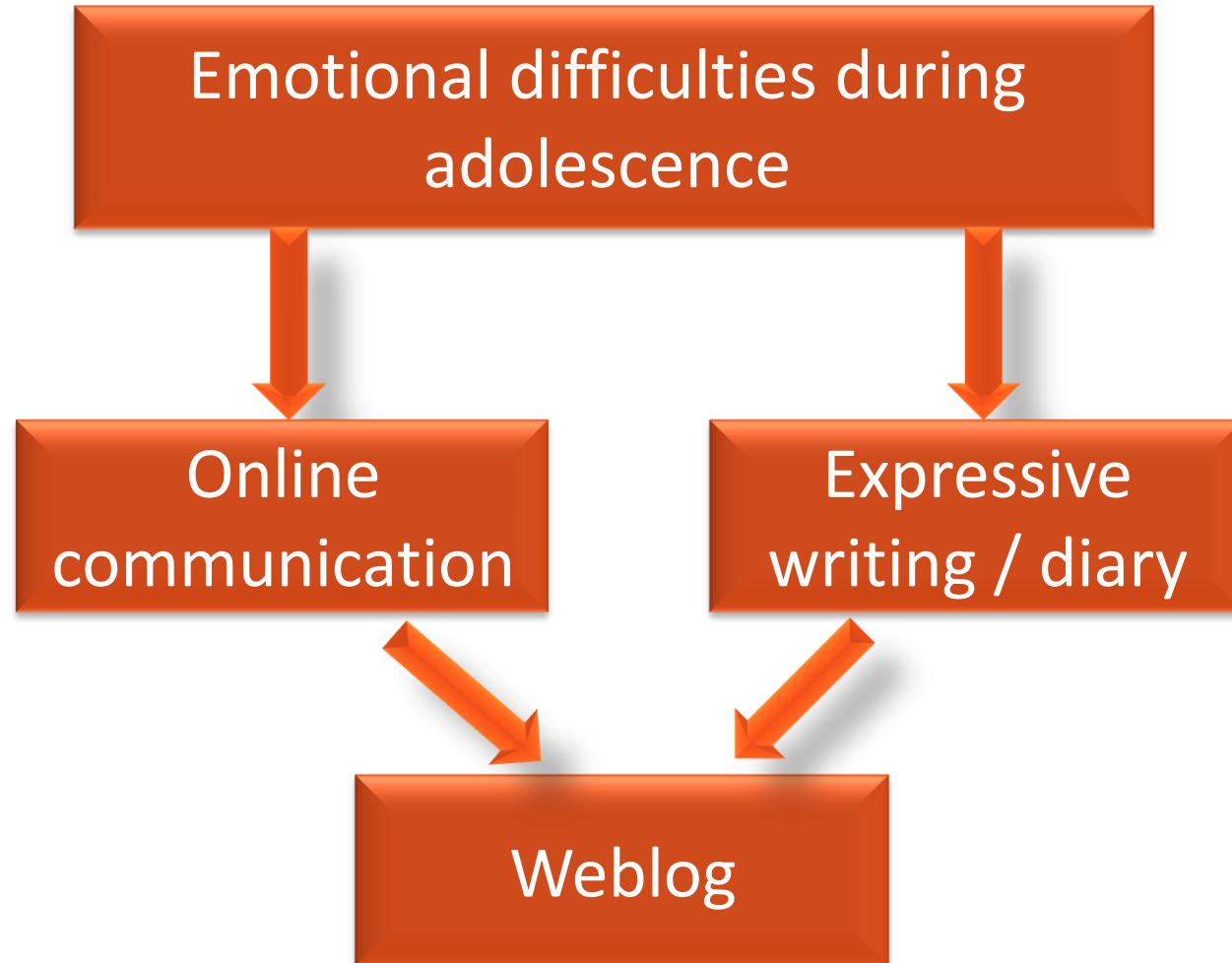
Meyran Boniel-Nissim & Azy Barak
University of Haifa, Israel

E-Mental Health Summit

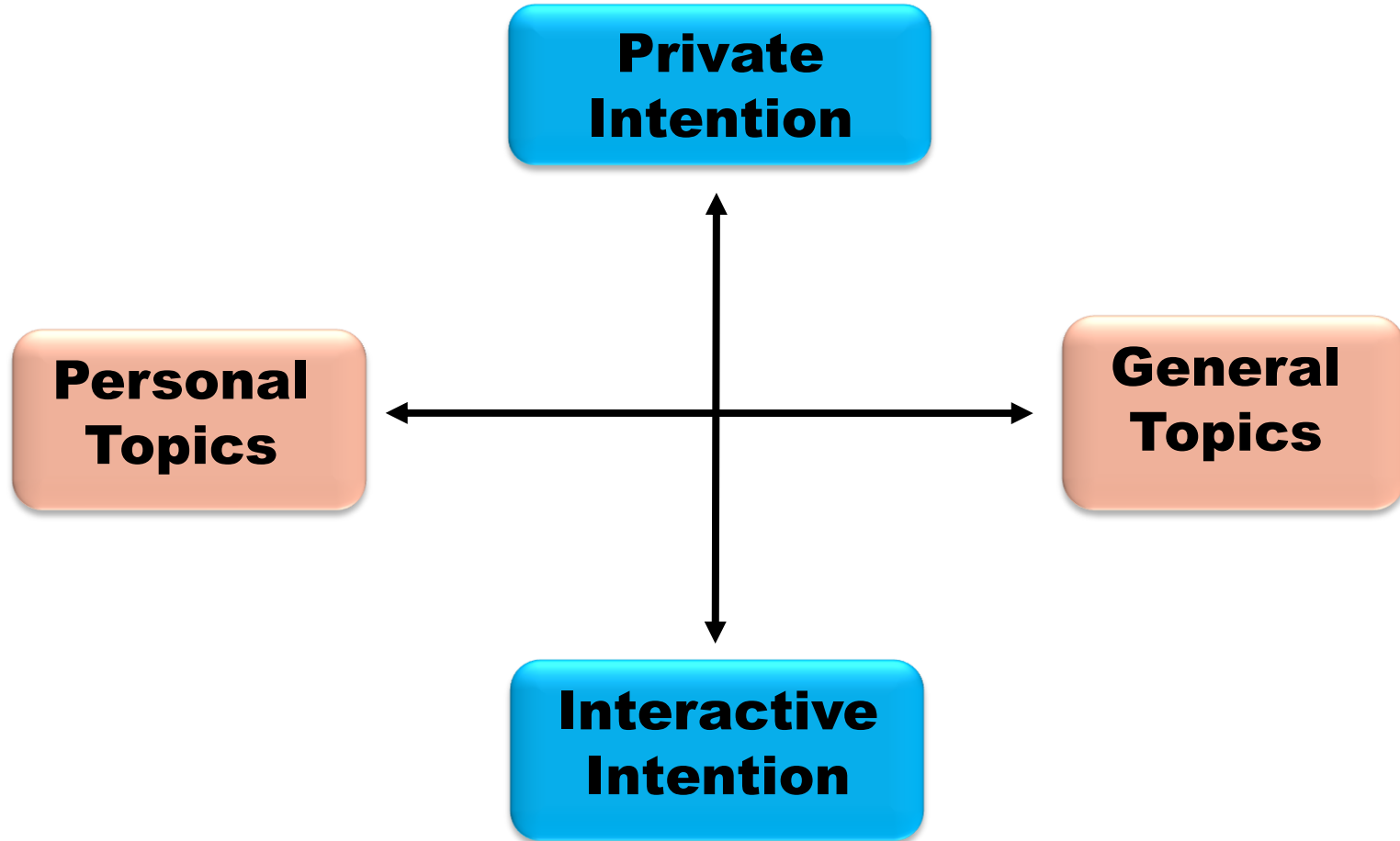
October, 2009

Amsterdam

Introduction



A blog: an interactive online diary



Purpose of this study

1. Online diary (blog) vs. Private diary
2. Personal distress-focused topics vs. General topics
3. Open to responses vs. Closed to responses



Maintaining a blog concerning social-emotional difficulties, open to responses leads to higher self-image, increased social behaviors, and decreased emotional distress.

Method

Participants

- **1365** adolescents, age 14-17, filled the *Index of Peer Relationship* (IPR).
- **225** respondents, diagnosed by the IPR as suffering from social-emotional difficulties, who did not manage a personal blog, were invited to participate in the study.
- **161** participants finished the intervention.
- The participants were randomly assigned to one of **6 groups** (approximately 30 participants in each):

1. Writing in blog on social difficulties, open to responses
2. Writing in blog on social difficulties closed to responses
3. Writing in blog on **general topics**, open to responses
4. Writing in blog on **general topics** closed to responses
5. Writing a private diary in participant's personal computer, on social difficulties
6. No-treatment control

Measures

Self-report questionnaires

- Social-emotional difficulties scale - *Index of Peer Relationship (IPR)*
- Social activities checklist
- Self-image scale - *Rosenberg Feeling of Inadequacy Scale*

*Other measures: text analysis, expert evaluations, personal interviews

Procedure

- **Over 10 weeks**, participants in the 5 writing groups were instructed to write (respective to their experimental condition) **at least twice a week**.
- Participants were measured at **pre-** and **post-** intervention time, by all outcome measures, and again **two months following** the intervention.

Results

Blog on social difficulties,
open to responses

Blog on social difficulties
closed to responses

Blog on **general topics**,
open to responses

Blog on **general topics**,
closed to responses

Private diary in the
personal computer, on
social difficulties

No-treatment control

	<u>Social Behavior</u>			<u>Peer Relationship</u>			<u>Self-Image</u>		
	Pre	Post	FU	Pre	Post	FU	Pre	Post	FU
N	64.65	68.73	22	67.54	73.27	22	23.54	27.85	22
M	61.82	68.73	64.32	67.54	73.27	72.91	22.21	27.85	28.23
SD	16.23	14.93	15.32	12.53	14.15	14.92	3.63	4.75	4.26
N	71.81	76.41	20	74.85	79.78	20	29.26	32.30	20
M	71.81	76.41	78.45	74.85	79.78	79.50	29.26	32.30	32.30
SD	19.09	18.20	16.74	9.76	10.24	10.48	3.90	4.33	4.16
N	76.46	78.11	23	76.36	80.43	23	29.64	32.36	23
M	76.46	78.11	77.33	76.36	80.43	79.39	29.64	32.36	23.35
SD	11.84	11.17	12.74	7.42	6.89	8.27	4.30	4.28	4.14
N	27	27	19	27	27	19	27	27	19
M	70.00	70.00	70.00	70.00	70.00	70.00	70.00	70.00	70.00
SD	15.23	15.23	15.23	15.23	15.23	15.23	15.23	15.23	15.23
N	27	27	19	27	27	19	27	27	19
M	72.59	72.59	72.59	72.59	72.59	72.59	72.59	72.59	72.59
SD	12.69	12.80	9.79	8.36	7.80	8.06	3.90	4.53	4.18
N	27	27	19	27	27	19	27	27	19
M	69.00	68.37	68.37	70.48	70.52	70.95	28.89	28.56	29.11
SD	12.88	13.19	12.01	11.82	11.78	9.94	4.56	4.53	5.14

All the results were consistent in the follow up evaluation after two months

Summary

- Participants who wrote a private diary did not improve in comparison to most of the groups who maintained a blog
- The intervention of writing a blog about social difficulties caused the greatest gain in comparison to writing about general topics
- Writing blogs open to responses gained more than those writing blogs closed to responses
- All of the other measures: text analysis, expert evaluations, personal interviews supported these findings

Discussion

- Writing cure: writing about the difficulties
- Writing in cyberspace:
 - Integration of private and public
 - Practice social skills
 - Motivation and commitment
- The benefits of maintaining a blog - not just writing but **writing and communicating**
- The importance of feedback

The blog as a therapeutic tool for counselors and therapists: blogs that focus on personal content concentrating on social-emotional difficulties will significantly contribute as long as they will be open to responses and as more the responses will occur.

Thank you for listening

Meyran Boniel-Nissim

meyranbn@gmail.com

<http://tinyurl.com/meyranbn>

Prof. Azy Barak

azy@construct.haifa.ac.il

<http://tinyurl.com/azybarak>

