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# ABSTRACTS

## The use of the internet in helping lonely teenagers: The therapeutic value of writing a blog

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The present study examined the therapeutic value of blogging for adolescents who experience social-emotional difficulties (e.g., loneliness, shyness). Adolescents find the cyberspace to be a comfortable, secure and nonthreatening place to interact with others. Furthermore, research shows that writing a personal diary is a valuable therapeutic means for relieving emotional distress and promoting well-being. Therefore, managing a blog – a personal diary on the internet – can relieve social-emotional difficulties. Since literature has shown a connection between personality characteristics – introvert-extrovert – and the use of the internet, blog writing enables examination of this connection.

Based on a field experiment, the study included adolescents, pre-assessed as having social-emotional difficulties, randomly assigned to six groups (26–28 participants in each): four groups were assigned to blogging (writing about their difficulties or free writing; either open or closed to responses), one group was assigned to writing a diary on personal computers, and one group was a non-treatment control group. Participants in the five writing groups

were instructed to post messages at least twice a week over a period of ten weeks. Outcome measures included scales of social-emotional difficulties, self-esteem and a social activities checklist. Measurement took place at pre- and post-intervention and upon follow-up two months later. Results showed that participants who maintained a blog significantly improved on all measures. Moreover, those who wrote about their difficulties gained the most. Within the latter groups, writers of blogs open to responses gained more than those with closed blogs. These results were consistent with the follow-up evaluation. No differences were revealed between introvert and extrovert participants.

**Keywords:** cyberspace, blog, adolescents, social-emotional difficulties, expressive writing, personality

## The computer's cold world, the book's warm world: Warmness perceptions of the book and the computer among teenagers

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**Assia Sharon**, Ph.D., Lecturer, University of Haifa and Levinsky College of Education; Head of Assif Publication House Writing and Editing Center

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Warmness is related to emotional aspects, and causes attraction, whereas coldness causes rejection. Computer rejection relates to computer anxiety, which might delay career and personal development. The differences between the warmness of the book and the warmness of the computer were examined in the present study. 213 teenagers from four high schools participated in the study. They were assigned to a book group and a computer group. Each participant chose four metaphors of forty warm and non-warm metaphors offered in an associative metaphor questionnaire. Significant differences were found through the chi-square test ( $p < .001$ ), between books and computers in respect to their perceived warmness. Books were perceived as much warmer than computers. ZMET interviews with 12 participants validated this finding and also showed that both – books and computers – are perceived as a world that enables the users to enter it and become cut off from the outside world. Suggestions on how to design warmer computer environments are offered. In addition, ways to interpret associative warm metaphors, i.e. a new tool effective in revealing implicit attitudes and perceptions, are discussed.

**Keywords:** attitudes towards computer, attitudes towards books, warm, warmth, book perceptions, computer perceptions, metaphors, computers anxiety, metaphor questionnaire, literacy, computer literacy, designing computer environments

## "How I became a pirate..." Group therapy aimed at strengthening the mother–child bond by means of creative self-expression

**Judith Rybko**, Ph.D., Lecturer at Oranim Academic College of Education, for Educational Counseling Programs and Social Community Education, a Psychodrama Therapist and a Supervisor and Group Analyst

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*"If you want to build a ship, teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea"* Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

A disruption in the family such as a divorce affects each member of the family in different ways. This article describes and examines short-term therapeutic intervention, anchored in creative self-expression. The group consisted of divorced mothers of young children. It was aimed at enhancing the bond within the mother-child dyad. Seven such dyads and five volunteers participated in the workshop, led by two facilitators, the authors of this article.

The story *This is how I became a pirate* (by Melinda Long) used for the workshop, illustrates the dyadic bond which developed in the story and served as a breakthrough, by initiating both a group and an individual process. As in the story, at the start of the workshop there was panic for fear of drowning, until the group became stable and well grounded. The article presents an intervention model along three interacting axes: the metaphorical-creative-expressive axis; the concrete one, anchored in the workshop activities; and the ensuing conceptualization of the process – holding, containing, and feeding. They constituted the central motif, interwoven in the activities throughout the workshop.

**Keywords:** divorced mothers, bibliotherapy, dyad, holding, containing, group therapy, group leader as parents, creative therapeutic self-expression

## Seeking help for substance abuse problems: Perspectives of students and educators in the Arab population in Israel

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**Rachel Sagee**, Ph.D., Researcher for the Research Authority at Levinsky College of Education

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While seeking help constitutes an important component in coping with the problem of drugs and alcohol among adolescents, this topic suffers from a paucity of research knowledge. The present study examined attitudes of Arab youth toward seeking help with regard to drugs and alcohol, as expressed from two perspectives: that of the students themselves, and that of the educational team. In addition, the relationship between the attitudes and personal characteristics of the pupils was also examined.

A total of 883 ninth- and eleventh-grade students and 263 educational team members – teachers and counselors – from the Arab population in Israel completed a questionnaire on attitudes toward seeking help for problems of drug and alcohol abuse and a questionnaire on subjective mental well-being. The questionnaires were administered in the participants' native language – Arabic.

The findings demonstrated a clear preference on the part of the students to turn to parents and friends for help rather than to sources within the school and professional sphere. The willingness to seek help from their mother was higher compared to all the other sources. A considerable discrepancy was found between the students' attitudes and the team's evaluation of those attitudes. In addition, participation in the intervention program was found to be the best predictor of willingness to seek help.

The discussion combines the findings of the present study with findings from a study about Jewish adolescents, and indicates both cross-cultural and cultural-dependent characteristics concerning seeking help with regard to drugs and alcohol.

**Keywords:** psycho-active substances, seeking help, Arab adolescents in Israel



## "Far from the maddening crowd": Other views of classroom disruptions

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Classroom disruptions are a very common phenomenon that hinders teachers' efforts and students' learning. Most studies adopt positivist methodology that views the students as solely responsible for the noise and restlessness. The current study takes a non-judgmental naturalistic qualitative approach. Two rounds of ethnographic inquiry enabled us to discern how each participant (pupils, teachers and 'external' figures) are involved in the initiation and maintenance of such disruptions. In the first round, we observed 24 lessons that were taught by student teachers; in the second round, we observed an additional 32 lessons that were taught by elementary school teachers in 8 schools. The findings contradict long-held beliefs: students are not solely to blame, whereas teachers and external figures contribute about one quarter to one third of all the cases of disruptions. Most cases were found to be rather mild and serious and violent cases appeared to be quite rare. Most cases, as we interpreted them, were not aimed at undermining the teachers' efforts and authority, but rather reflected the 'functional noise' of normal classroom activity. Some noisy utterances (regarded as 'declarations') expressed pupils' and teachers' legitimate needs. Teachers preferred to overlook and not respond to most of the disruptions. The authors recommend abandoning stigmatizing concepts (e.g. 'problematic behavior') and adopting more neutral terms (e.g. interruptions) that would enable the development of new methods to cope with noisy classroom environments.

**Keywords:** interruption, school, teacher, lesson, observation

## The place of psychological diagnosis in identifying learning disabilities among children: A position paper

**Varda Sharoni**, Ph.D., Head of the M.Ed Program in Learning Disabilities: Assessment and Educational Intervention, Head of the Center for Assessment of Learning Difficulties, Beit Berl Academic College

This position paper focuses on one of the many issues related to the assessment of learning disabilities in Israel: The underlying approach to psycho-cognitive assessment. It surveys the views of different researchers and presents the controversy surrounding the use of the discrepancy between intelligence and achievement as an indication of learning disabilities. The writer's position is presented and a recommendation is made to reconsider the discrepancy model and to use other models and procedures for the cognitive assessment of individuals with learning difficulties.

**Key words:** learning disabilities assessment psycho-cognitive assessment discrepancy between intelligence and achievement

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