



Text therapy redux

Description

Text therapy is simply communication between clients and their counsellors, clinicians or therapists via text media, such as email (non-synchronous) or real-time (synchronous) chat. Text chat has grown in many consumer contexts, abetted by automation: archiving, analysis, templates and AI-assisted bot technology.

Those who are sufficiently literate sometimes prefer the protections and security afforded by text, without video or sound, and sometimes with personal identities hidden. As a former user of chat rooms in their heyday I can confirm that communication via text-only media can be intense.

As of this date (22 Aug 2022), there is no entry for “text therapy” in wikipedia, nor does the term have the imprimatur of professional organisations. An article in 2013 used the designation to form a contrast with face-to-face therapy.

“Online text therapy would be expected to be less stimulus-rich than conventional face-to-face therapy (i.e., to lack the nonverbal cues), but it need not lead to a lesser quality interaction” (370).

Writing is good for well-being in any case. For some theorists, writing as therapy can reduce inhibition and help individuals resolve difficulties. An early article assessing the value of “scriptotherapies” provides an appealing rationale for its efficacy.

“a shift from talking to writing creates a new context and the opportunity for reframing, which potentially generates different perceptions, expectations, and, ultimately, behavior” (39).

Drawing, sculpting, making, designing and many avenues for expression presumably provide similar opportunities for re-framing, rendering familiar habits strange in some way. I would count blogging in this therapeutic category.

In my previous [post](#) I appropriated “text therapy” as a process that offers the promise to help you write better. As a supervisor of many PhD students I sometimes think of my role as that of an amateur text therapist.

In the early years of my own PhD I had the pleasure of meeting Sonia Kemp, wife of the social psychologist Michael Argyle. She edited texts for OUP. Michael said she had transformed his own ability to write. His 44 books and over 300 articles attested to that. So I was pleased to have her put a piece of my own writing under the microscope. Her guidance and correction were tuned to my own literary faults and foibles. She was my first “text therapist.”

I’m content to conflate writing as a form of therapy. Writing is a form of expression fraught with pathologies, symptoms, faults and habits. Writing requires nurture and renewed care, coaching, and counselling. The job of text therapy.

Also see posts: [Automated essay writing](#), [Academic writing and publishing online](#), and [Writing texts that flow](#).

References

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Category

1. Artificial Intelligence

Tags

1. creative writing
2. dialogue
3. therapy
4. writing

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