



Zohar's Mystic Humanistic Agony Column

With **Dr Dina Zohar Glouberman**

Dear Zohar, I'm a humanistic therapist and holistic embodiment is at the centre of my worldview. I'm very sceptical about so-called 'social' media and technology-mediated human relating, and the way I see it compromising our humanity. So the current C-virus lock-down has precipitated something of a professional crisis for me. I see most of my colleagues doing huge amounts of Zooming and Skyping with clients – yet so far, this is something I've resisted; and for the most part, my clients have been very understanding. But there could come a point where my clients seek help from other sources – and I start questioning the stance I'm taking. Am I just being over-precious and inflexible in this position I'm holding, or does my authenticity as a therapist demand that I stay true to these strongly held principles? I'd welcome your thoughts about this question to help me think it through more fully and, hopefully, openly. 'Josh'

Dear Josh,

I totally understand your dilemma. There is nothing like being face-to-face with someone to get a sense of presence and connection, and of course all these distance methods miss out on so much. This is more true for some clients than for others; some really need that connection and

warmth they get in the presence of a caring therapist, and suffer with the distance methods. Others don't mind so much.

I know for myself that when I'm travelling, or when clients live far away, I do use Skype or FaceTime; and though I feel it's so much better to see them in the same room, it still works, and keeps a deep connection going.

You of course have strong principles about technology-mediated relationships, and want to honour these, and this is great. Normally, you could say to clients that you only see people face-to-face, and if they live too far away to visit, they could see someone else if they so wish.

However the times are not normal. There is no such thing now as face-to-face contact. If someone really needs to see a therapist, they will therefore be forced to work with another practitioner who offers a virtual session. This may be second best, but can still be really wonderful and life changing. And maybe it is really you they want to see, and anyone else is second best no matter what the medium!

So here's my thought, given that this column is mystic as well as humanistic. Perhaps we can shift our idea of connection a bit, and recognise that we can and do connect with people we care about at long distances, sometimes without any

technical medium at all. How many times have you known something was wrong with someone you love who is far away, or phoned a friend you haven't seen in years and found their phone is busy because they are phoning you? How much evidence is there for distance healing, where if people are prayed for even without knowing it, their outcomes are improved?

Indeed, how is it that during this time of 'social distancing', we are in fact only physically distancing, and many of us are finding so many lapsed connections being renewed and enriching our lives?

So why not think of it this way: The connection is real, at any distance, if we are truly sending out love, compassion, and wisdom to the other. Skype or Zoom or FaceTime are just the medium we're using for this real connection, and they do enable us to talk, and problem-solve, and provide wisdom and love, and be a stable presence in another's life.

Of course, it's important to discuss all this with the client, since working virtually is of course changing the therapeutic frame. It is good to explore together the advantages and disadvantages of doing so, and the pitfalls involved. But in the

end, if they want to work with you, and they are willing to accept the only medium available, perhaps the most humane and humanistic thing you can do is say is: 'Yes. I'm here for you. Let's transcend time and space and make a difference to each other.' I'd sign up for that!

Dina Glouberman, Ph.D, is a psychologist, psychotherapist, writer, international trainer, and world expert in imagery-based therapies. She is Co-founder/Director since 1979 of Skyros Holistic Holidays, which has pioneered community-oriented holistic health holidays worldwide. More recently, she has founded and directs the Aurora Centre in Southern Italy, to train therapists, counsellors, and consultants in her approach. She is the author of the classic and widely translated books *Life Choices*, *Life Changes*, *The Joy of Burnout*, *You Are What You Imagine*, and *Into the Woods and Out Again*, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Association for Humanistic Psychology (Britain) (www.dinaglouberman.com) (www.skyros.com) (www.ahpweb.org)