

Preface

As dreamers who know they are dreaming, most of us realize that we are in the midst of unprecedented change, even as we engage in the minutia of everyday life. Relatively mundane tasks such as buying our groceries or pumping our gas are now often dependent on technology. Sleek, hip, and oh-so-convenient, our mobile phones bring a world of computing to our hip pockets.

Our youth have adapted to this change in ways that leave many of us in awe. Young people, even very young people, now have the capacity to dazzle and amaze us with their technical prowess. They reverse the teacher-student roles quietly, as they help us untangle our email or bring our PowerPoints to life with video and audio effects that flip and whiz. Professors cannot teach without being aware that any student can take a picture of the professor's every gesture, facial expression or body stance at any time, to post YouTube with a particularly humorous or scathing comment. For those in the behavioral health field, it is apparent that technology increasingly offers new opportunities for delivering professional services. However, these opportunities, no matter how promising, remain elusive to many. This is uncharted territory, and how and where to begin or where to go can be a daunting experience.

Welcome to the future. This book on technology in behavioral health aims to provide real insights into how one can envision a career that is fully integrated with the technological environment. It is intended to inspire both graduate students and experienced behavioral and mental health professionals by offering perspectives on emerging, nontraditional career paths that derive from the current technology revolution. Based on personal histories, it illustrates how some professionals have successfully embraced technology to the benefit of their careers and their clients' health. It is readily apparent that, for many of our chapter authors, inspiration and the excitement of exploration have led to new ways of contributing to our respective fields. Themes of rigorous discipline, adversity, ingenuity, wisdom, and plain good luck are evident through various age groups, disciplines, employment settings, and continents represented by our authors. From young and old; from hospital adminis-

trators, physicians, lawyers, and psychiatrists to social workers, psychologists, nurses, counselors, and in between; from hospitals to universities; from private and group practices to corporate settings; and from various countries, our authors were all eager to share their stories of carving a personal career path by embracing new technology.

They are a new breed of behavioral and mental health professionals who can serve as models who point the way for others to follow. While fascinating and often engrossing, the specifics of the stories you will read in this book are *not the way*. Rather, the editors of this text encourage you to look beyond the individual stories of the chapter authors whose stories are offered. You are encouraged to consider the experiences described herein to help you to plot your own path toward your technology-related career and professional goals. Although it can be challenging to adapt to the emerging 21st Century landscape, behavioral health professionals are optimally equipped for engaging in change rather than just theorizing, lecturing, researching or guiding others to weather such difficult processes. Luckily for you, the many different authors of this book's chapters have made unprecedented leaps of faith to get to where they are now. As a reader then, you are in the fortunate position to benefit from an inside glimpse of their successes, failures and words of wisdom regarding how to get from a behavioral health degree to a satisfying career in a technology-related field.

Five introductory chapters were invited to provide a real-world, practical context for the individual stories of the pioneering adventurers whose experiences are depicted in the main body of this book. The five chapters defining the perimeter of the area include general advances in the age of health care reform; technology-related healthcare law; behavioral technology professional education and training; integrated healthcare; and technology overuse and gaming disorders.

The subsequent chapter authors then offer their personal accounts of how they are using different technologies in their work, taking sometimes unique and often serendipitous routes to reach their sometimes undefined goals. They include thoughtful evaluations of their decisions related to immersing themselves in technology in lieu of "settling" for traditional behavioral health care careers. Readers will note that the authors' training and experiences vary considerably, as do their choices related to which technology to adopt, or develop, or research.

At identifiable points, their divergence from traditional formal training backgrounds becomes palpable. The reader will sense the grit, the resolve and the occasional tears of many authors as they re-count episodes of self-questioning about their futures. The reader will also recoil upon reading of the frequent discouragement and occasionally, mistreatment by traditional colleagues to tried to dissuade the authors from making their "risky" career choices. Yet, these brave explorers persisted courageously, steadfastly, and as if driven to tolerate the disapproval until they met with the success that they knew awaited. Clearly their stories demonstrate that there are many creative and exciting routes to developing personally satisfying and financially successful careers in behavioral health and technology, but that such an explorer must be willing to weather the inevitable storms that are part of the voyage. Hopefully, this anthology of pioneering spirits will excite the reader into plotting his or her own course into this exciting new world.

This book then, is a testimony to professionals in the behavioral fields as they adapt to worldwide economic forces that are creating new challenges and new opportunities. A willingness to take risks, seek or develop the needed training, try and fail only to try again, and to create their own community are common characteristics of this assembly of creative and persistent explorers. Perseverance is illustrated in repeated creative manifestations of a “can do” and “will do” attitude that will not (and possibly cannot) tolerate attempts at suppression.

Each chapter begins with an inspirational quote that the authors felt relevant to their work. Such quotes are followed by a vignette depicting a “moment in time” during their tech-related day, or an example of someone using their technology. Authors next describe their formal training and work experiences as a backdrop to illustrate from whence they came. So as to more clearly describe how they managed to traverse the chasm between their traditional and nontraditional worlds. Next, they outline some of the perceived pros and cons relevant to their chosen behavioral technology-related work. Lastly, the authors provide references to clearly demonstrate that their work has an evidence base, and is thus replicable. Each chapter is freestanding and can be independently read.

The editors wish to acknowledge and express gratitude to the eminent psychologists, Drs. Luciano L’Abate and Philip Zimbardo, who graciously agreed wrote the book forewords. Both of these mentors have taken the time to express perspectives that are pivotal for the future of behavioral telepractice. Dr. L’Abate’s emphasis on developing and using empirical methods with the use of technology is crucial for establishing a strong evidence base for telepractice. The late Dr. L’Abate has not only been an advocate for the use of technologies for more than two decades, but he has been steadfast in his focused assertion that professionals have a responsibility to develop and follow specific, effective and replicable routes to creating change. The foreword provided by Dr. Zimbardo points to the need to remain humble and open to new ways of delivering the services that many professionals have spent decades perfecting. As he humorously described, much can be learn from the younger generations. Beyond doubt, technological innovation is needed to help the many people who are still unserved or underserved by the professional behavioral health community.

The editors appreciate the time and effort that the chapter authors took in writing about their experiences with technology in a personal rather than academic style. The editors also thank their families, the Coalition for Technology in Behavioral Science (www.CTiBS.org), and Sharon Panulla at Springer Science for their steadfast support and encouragement. Lastly, they thank the many professionals who could not write a chapter for the current book, but who wholeheartedly supported their efforts to offer this compendium of insights to share with the interprofessional community at large.

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Career Paths in Telemental Health

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