

Shoshana Fagen



It is so fabulous to hear from you. I hope you and all the other AUNE staff and students are holding up okay in these unusual times. I have had the good fortune of working for a hospital that responded very quickly when it became clear that meeting in person would become unsafe. We were able to transition to telehealth within a week. Though the transition was a little rocky in the moment, looking back on it now, I realize how lucky I am that I have been able to continue to work and see most of my clients with almost no interruption. I work with children and teens and it has definitely been a learning curve, particularly with the younger ones. One tool that a colleague introduced to me (and totally made me feel old) was the app Snap Camera, where you can turn yourself into all sorts of things or add all sorts of things into your camera shot. It was designed for snapchat but seems to work for many of the live video platforms as well. We have been using this tool to help improve communication - like an extension of the emoji. So when a client has a reaction to what we are saying but doesn't want to or doesn't have the skills to say it, they can find the right background or even turn themselves into a potato to express themselves. I love the creativity that comes with it and it makes me feel as though these clients are able to communicate in their native language in a way they did not have access to when we met live.

I continue to also pick up shifts doing crisis work in two local hospitals and volunteer with the Disaster Mental Health Team with the American Red Cross. The crisis work is definitely more stressful. Going into emergency rooms is an anxiety provoking experience these days and although all mental health patients in Massachusetts have COVID tests before being sent to a psych unit, I am still interacting with them before the testing comes back. People, particularly family, have asked me why I keep picking up these shifts and I always answer that individuals struggling with mental illness don't have the luxury of choosing to take time off of their condition just because there is a pandemic and thus I do not either. At the Red Cross we have expanded our services to check in with the disaster response volunteers in addition to the clients we serve. We have implemented a policy that all disaster volunteers (who are typically helping families in the immediate aftermath of house fires) get a check in call from us just for support - to 'take care of our own' as we put it. These calls have been received with much appreciation.

So I have been keeping myself very busy over the past couple of months and would be happy to answer questions from any students if they have any.

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