

A letter to my 'newly qualified counsellor self'

Dear Jay-1998,

Congratulations on getting your Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling!

Whenever you're not sure remember Mick Burton's 'WiDStBO' – 'When in Doubt State the Bleeding Obvious'.

Relate well to the other person and learn by experience. As Polkinghorne says: 'therapists use previously effective actions as a guide for their future actions; their clinical experiences are the source of their knowledge': all that hoo-ha about approach x versus approach y is just something you will have to watch with frustration from the side-lines. And the politics in the NHS and NICE will unfortunately get worse. They will continue to ask the wrong questions and generate the wrong answers. There will be battles to fight there so join an organisation like the PCU (Psychotherapy and Counselling Union). You will also have this thing called IAPT (Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies) which will unfortunately decrease rather than increase choice for clients/patients (and decrease the chances of most therapists gaining employment in the NHS) – again, if you want to fight that you will need to join something like the PCU.

In terms of conducting sessions: as far as possible use the client's language – on the other hand some clients can easily get things like the Drama Triangle which can transform their relationships at work or home. 'Psychoeducation' is really useful, especially in shorter-term work for EAPs and insurance companies.

You will survive and with luck thrive. In the private/independent sector you will have to get your head round 'marketing'. There are a few jobs in the NHS but for

whatever reasons the NHS continues to marginalise both counsellors and psychotherapists.

When Irvin Yalom's *The Gift of Therapy* comes out in 2002 get yourself a copy. A no-bullshit guide to being a therapist that should be on your therapy bookshelf even if it's the only book you have. And read his *Lying on the Couch* novel for a knowing chuckle about it all. For you it's already been out a year. Why haven't you already got a copy?

As Bill Hicks might say: 'Enjoy the ride!'

Love,

Jay-2019

342 words

Jay Beichman PhD MBACP(SnrAccred) has been practising in Brighton since 1998. He has recently completed a PhD about pluralistic approaches to therapy available at <https://research.brighton.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/how-counsellors-and-psychotherapists-make-sense-of-pluralistic-ap>.