

Letters from the Presidents

CO-PRESIDENTS MESSAGE NASSAU CHAPTER

On behalf of the Nassau Chapter Board it is our pleasure to provide you with this update. First and foremost we want to thank our Board members for their hard work, dedication and commitment to the NYSSCSW Nassau Chapter. Thank you Susan Kahn, (Newsletter, Book Club), Carline Napolitano, (Website, Programming Committee, and Newsletter), Barbara Murphy, (Public Relations), Joseph Reiher, (Treasurer, Programming Committee) Jennifer Shapiro-Lee, (Mentorship), Linda Feyder, (Secretary, Membership), Jannette Urcioli, (State level Member at Large), and Faith Kappenberg (Scholarship Committee and University Liaison).

Since the onset of the pandemic, our professional lives have been in a state of constant change. We've dealt with the necessity of continuously making quick adjustments to ensure the safety and well-being of our patients. Chapter members are continuing to share the latest information regarding telehealth, consent forms, billing, CDC regulations for reopening our offices, and have provided support to colleagues struggling to navigate their way through the stress and emotional trauma of the pandemic. By adapting to telehealth, obstacles that could have prevented patients from receiving mental health services have been overcome. Many of us are finding some unexpected benefits using telehealth, as we realize that once offices are reopened, we will be able to conduct sessions when people do not have a car, or are unable to physically get to the office due to illness or inclement weather. A silver lining indeed.

Over the past couple of months, the Nassau Chapter Board committee has continued putting together events and looking for opportunities to increase our exposure.

The Programming Committee organized a free Zoom conference on "Treating Anxiety in Children and Adolescents: A Behavioral, Emotional and Neurological Perspective." Facilitated by Roger Keizerstein, the conference had 33 participants. During this program we had the pleasure of awarding the Shelia Peck Scholarship in the amount of \$500 to Carmen Lemus, BSW graduate from Molloy College. The Committee is in the process of setting a date for 2021 for a conference on Depressed, Borderline, or Bipolar, including tools and methodologies for working with these populations. led by Brian Quinn. That committee is also exploring possibilities for speakers for a spring conference.

Since April 2020, the Mentorship Committee has duly and energetically held monthly meetings. We have gained one new member, and the attendees have been very enthusiastic. Jennifer will be leading a mindfulness/meditation workshop at the new member event on October 18th.

The Membership Committee is collaborating with the Board's other committees to develop partnerships, expand our outreach and sponsor conferences in an effort to increase awareness of the benefits of membership in the Society. We are hosting a Fall Welcome Meet and Greet, to which new members as well as all chapter members will be invited. We have planned it for October 15th, and, if successful, we plan to run it on an annual basis. It will give our new members a chance to meet the board members and find out the work we are all doing. We will encourage all interested members to attend, and will want to hear from them, as well as the new members, as to their activities, work and interests.

The Committee for the Aging headed by Sheila Rindler, now meets bi-monthly. Prior to the pandemic they met in person. They now meet by Zoom.

The Website Committee has been actively working with Kristin (TMS) to update the Nassau Chapter Web page. The Public Relations committee has been working closely with the State Board to develop outreach and marketing tools to promote the benefits of membership in the Society. Both of these committees are engaged in improving our website's social work directory, in an effort to increase referrals to our members. As of mid-September, Jannette Urcioli will be heading our Website Committee.

The Scholarship Committee has now formed a strong partnership with Adelphi University for an MSW student scholarship. We received three papers, but will need to further fine-tune requirements and dates for the scholarship. In addition, we will be recruiting MSW students who can serve as liaisons between the school and the Society.

We will continue to offer a scholarship to a BSW student at Molloy College, who plans to attend an MSW program in the fall. We are meeting with Molloy as well, as we are making a few changes to requirements for those papers.

In conjunction with our Public Relations Committee, we are reaching out to organizations, agencies and social platforms to build awareness of the work and benefits of being a member of the NYSSCSW. Please contact Barbara Murphy at askier@verizon.net with any suggestions.

This fall, by popular demand, Susan will be reintroducing the Book Club!

Presently, the Nassau Board members meet monthly by Zoom. The date and the time are posted on the Listserv. We encourage all members to attend and volunteer their time and talents.

Ellie Perlman, Co-President

Patricia Traynor, Co-President

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE SUFFOLK CHAPTER

Our Suffolk Chapter is populated with amazingly dedicated and hard-working professionals. Being a part of this august group is an honor and a delight. With this Covid pandemic, there's not even the possibility of gathering together. Our get togethers, over the years, have been nourishing for the mind, the spirit and the flesh. Times will come again to join one another and "feast". Despair isn't an option and so we don't...

I have found myself working hard to remind myself of the virtue that Patience is and to remember other life moments that felt interminable - One day at a time anything can be survived.

We are in this together we are making the best of a terrible moment. This pandemic doesn't have to defeat us, and we can use lessons learned, as we move forward. Anyone interested in a zoom support group/peer supervisory, is welcome to call me on my private number, 631-335-6931. I'll welcome attempts to connect — for any reason, at any hour.

"Making the best of — " is something with which I've experience..., and I know I'm not alone. Each of us can effect meaningful change, and we each have the responsibility to do so.

Our Chapter has survived tough times and shall again.. Onward and upward — keep strong — stay strong — and stay safe.

Sandra Jo Lane, LCSW-R, BCD, CGP

Table of Contents

President's Letters

Ellie Perlman.....1

Patricia Traynor1

Sandra Jo Lane1

Board of Directors.....2

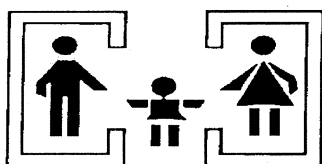
Board Spotlights.....3-4

Pandemic Articles.....5-11

Committees.....12-13

Members Doings.....15

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MEET YOUR NASSAU & SUFFOLK OFFICERS



Ellie Perlman, LCSW
Co-President Nassau Board
Acting Treasurer, Nassau Board

Since 1974, when I received my Masters in Social Work from Hunter College, I have worked in the field of social work. In 1980, I received a four year certificate in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis from the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health, in New York City.

After receiving my MSW, I worked at Beth Israel Medical Center until 1979, and in 1979 began my private practice, which I have held throughout the years, first in Manhattan and then in Suffolk County. I worked at the Family Service League in Huntington as a faculty liaison for Adelphi. I have been solely in private practice since 1997, where I see children, adults, couples and families. And I have been called in by employee assistance organizations to do crisis interventions and trauma work.

I have held various positions in the NYSSCSW since 1981.

I have always been involved on the macro level, politically and in the community, as I believe that our efforts as social workers will be more successful as we work on those levels as well, to expand equality, advocate for necessary social services, education, housing and meaningful and fairly compensated employment, for everyone.

In my free time I like to be active with bike-riding, cross-country skiing, swimming, walking, gardening, travel, and I especially like political, historical and suspense movies, as well as reading fiction and non-fiction. I am looking forward to our bookclub!

I would like to continue the work of increasing public and professional awareness of clinical social workers and advocating for our rigorous standards of education and ongoing training. We have a dynamic, hard-working board, all of whom are putting great effort into achieving these goals, as highlighted in our joint letter. I would like to see these efforts continue as we work to strengthen the field and increase respect for it. I became co-president because I wanted to do everything possible to grow and strengthen the chapter and the profession.



Patricia Traynor, LCSW-R, CLC
Co-President, Nassau Board

For over twenty years I've practiced in the field of social work, including working with children, adolescents and adults. During that time, I have held positions in direct practice and management. I have provided counseling to individuals and families on child welfare issues, child abuse and neglect, trauma, child custody issues, anxiety and depression. For the past five years I have been employed by St. John's Episcopal Hospital; presently I am a Manager at their Community Mental Health Center. In addition, I have a private practice where I conduct therapeutic supervised visitation, individual and family therapy. I make home visits to homebound seniors.

I have coached and mentored individuals on professional and personal development, life transitions, employee relationship issues, career development, networking and issues related to self-esteem.

In September 2013 I became a member and started participating in the New York State Clinical Society of Social Workers - Nassau Chapter Board. Since October 2013, I have held a variety of chair Committee positions for the Nassau Chapter, including on the Membership, Programing and Scholarship Committees. In January 2015, I was elected Member at Large at the State level for The New York State Clinical Society of Social Workers. After serving as Vice-President of the Nassau Chapter, in January 2019 I was honored to be elected Co-President of the Nassau Chapter. I am a longtime member of the National Association of Social Workers.

In my free time I enjoy spending time with my family and friends. I support a number of charities involved in research pertaining to Cancer and Diabetes, including Stand Up To Cancer, the Mary Stolfa Foundation and Winthrop University Hospital Bite of Hope for Pediatric Diabetes.

Jannette Urciuoli, LCSW

Jannette Urciuoli is fairly new to the association and decided to run for the State Member At large position to learn more about the association and to be more engaged. She is an associate professor at Queensborough Community College, CUNY and has been working as a college mental health counselor there for over 20 years. In addition to providing mental health services, Dr. Urciuoli also enjoys college teaching and working as a faculty governance leader.



Linda Feyder, LCSW
Secretary, Nassau Board

Linda Feyder, LCSW-R, serves as Secretary of the NYSSCSW board and as co-chair of the Membership Committee. She received her MSW from New York University and her MA in creative writing and literature from the University of Houston. She has been in private practice in Great Neck, NY since 2010 and specializes in couple's counseling as well as anxiety and depression in adults and adolescents. Prior to working in private practice she worked in substance abuse counseling with a specific focus on family members and loved ones of the substance dependent. She started the first family support group at the Community Organization for Parents and Youth in Great Neck, NY.

When not practicing, Linda enjoys creative writing and her first collection of short stories will be published in September 2021. She finds that writing and counseling are closely united in her love for story and personal narrative. "Human beings are endlessly fascinating. I love listening to their stories and creating stories for characters of my own design." Linda grew up in California and has lived in New York since 1992.



Sandra Jo Lane, LCSW, BCD, CGP
President, Suffolk Board

I knew as a child that I was meant to be a Social Worker. Both of my parents were Social Workers and I had read about great things being done by others to implement change during this country's earlier years. My heroine was Jane Addams. It was incredible to me to think that a Nobel peace prize could have been won by a Social Worker. During graduate school at Columbia, I lived in what was NYC's last residential community settlement house in the three decimated neighborhoods of Manhattan, in the middle of Hell's Kitchen. Among other things, I ran a Reading Readiness program there. After I had earned my college degree at age 20, I went to work in the field of psychology and studied human gender identity. I was most interested in what it was that made some boy think that he wanted to grow up to be a mommy, or some girl think that she was in the wrong body and wanted to be a dad. The education I had had at Vassar College (which had recently become coeducational) was conducive to thinking critically about some of these crucially important issues and ended up guiding my decisions about the path I would take.

I had always known that I wanted to be a parent and share some of the love that I felt I had in me. I am, unfortunately, a member of the terrible sorority of bereft mothers. My firstborn, lost as the result of what the state informed us was medical malpractice, has been gone for over a quarter of a century. My work as a psychotherapist enabled me to know with certainty that I could survive this excruciating hell. My husband and I were most fortunate, two years later, to become parents to four of the most amazing quadruplets I have the pleasure of knowing. These Ramsay babies will have celebrated their 24th birthday by the time this is read. Each is a young person who is making a difference.

I am an avid reader and created, naïvely, a long time ago, World Literacy: 2000, Inc. (which I later had to pay to dissolve) and I subsequently incorporated, a few years ago, still believing that every child's right to read must be guaranteed, Right2READ, Inc. Ever optimistic – and always believing that WE can make a difference and affect change..

I love working with patients and seeing them move to a place of, "I never knew I could be this happy" (adding invariably, "it's not as if everything is perfect though"). I have always felt most fortunate to be able to be of service.



Sharon Greaney-Watt
Vice-President, Suffolk Board

Sharon Greaney-Watt, LCSW, CASAC, Suffolk Chapter Vice President, has been a member of the NYSSCSW for over 25 years. With a private practice in Babylon, Sharon has enjoyed the many NYSSCSW educational and professionally supportive experiences through the years. She has held various roles in the Suffolk Chapter through the years such as newsletter editor president, and membership chair. She welcomes her involvement with the chapter in the role as Vice President.

Sharon is managing, comfortably, the additional challenges of work in these interesting times.



Veronica Harkins, LCSW
Secretary, Suffolk Board

Veronica Harkins, LCSW is a seasoned clinician who has spent twenty five years as an administrator in social service agencies. Populations served included people with AIDS and people living with serious mental illness. For the last five years she's been able to dedicate herself to her psychotherapy practice on a full time basis. Treatment of trauma is her area of specialization. She completed level two training in EMDR in 2007.

Despite the challenges of telehealth she's very grateful to be able to continue to be present for her clients during this pandemic. She's mindful of the fact that millions of people are suffering at this time of turmoil. She realizes whatever challenges she encounters she comes from a position of privilege.

Veronica's service to the Suffolk Chapter, as Secretary, is most appreciated!

THE PANDEMIC

This issue is devoted to articles submitted by members of our society concerning the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact it has had on our professional and personal lives. As a result, there will not be a Clinical Section in this edition.

Susan H. Kahn, LCSW, BCD, editor

Practice in the Time of a Pandemic

Susan H. Kahn, LCSW, BCD

It all began when the crocuses started to blossom, went on to ruin the summer and now here we are at the start of autumn with no end in sight. I haven't seen the inside of my office in six months. A new word has been added to my vocabulary: Telehealth. Our life styles have seen dramatic changes. Handshakes and hugs and kisses are invitations to a deadly disease. Face to face contact is at a six foot distance. Movies and Broadway Theaters are closed. Concert halls are shuttered. Restaurants are starving. Sending children to school has become more risky than ever. And mental health issues are becoming more apparent.

My practice has been primarily with children, young adults and families. It has become quite a challenge seeing youngsters on Zoom or Doxy.me and trying to keep them focused. The intimacy I once enjoyed with these patients has been diminished as we try to communicate with each other through a computer screen. It has become more difficult to adequately assess the body language which is integral to our interactions with one another. I have great admiration for teachers having to do this on a daily basis for hours at a time. At the same time, I have become somewhat creative in modifying games to hold the children's attention. Have you ever tried playing Battleship or Candy Land via Zoom? How about checkers? Clue?

The outbreak of the pandemic and the consequent lockdown has had profound consequences. With businesses closing and massive layoffs, families have been placed in rather stressful circumstances. In some cases, grown children who had moved away for work or school and developed their own life styles, have had to move back in with their parents, adding an additional financial burden to the household and sacrificing their independence. The financial strains on the family have been impacting on the children as well.

One of the changes I have seen is with families, especially when one or more of the parents is working remotely. With both parents now home, they have become more accessible and involved in family therapy, where as before, it was always difficult to have one or more of the parents attend a session.

On the other hand, sometimes the close proximity of family members has become an issue as there can be a loss of privacy and independence, especially amongst adolescents. This can become especially acute when there are multiple children living within the same household, each needing their own space when involved in online education programs.

During sessions with these patients, with both parents and other siblings within the same environment, privacy becomes especially difficult. Other issues have arisen when the internet bandwidth is insufficient and the program freezes, or some other glitch arises and we have to depend upon another individual to remedy the situation. The continuity of the session is broken and it becomes difficult to pick up the threads.

I sometimes question whether this is going to be the new norm. Remember how flying used to be? You just went to the airport, presented your ticket, deposited your luggage and boarded the plane? No long lines going through security, having to take off your shoes, being scanned. Not anymore. Will this be how practice is going to be as we look to the future? Remote visits with our patients? Temperature scanning and face masks in order to be face to face in our offices? On the one hand, I must admit it is convenient not having to run to the office. But on the other hand, we have lost the close relationships we had developed with our patients by being remote from them. I'm afraid this virus is going to be with us for a very long time, with others sure to follow. We will all have to adjust to a new way of living and practice.

Challenging Times

Eleanor Perlman, LCSW, DCSW

As I think back over the past six months, I can share that it has been a strange time for me. It has opened up new pathways and ways of looking at the world. My initial feeling about doing telehealth was not a positive one. I jumped into it and figured I would make the best of it. I have found there to be some plusses in the process. A few days of storms when patients would have missed appointments were no longer an issue! Seeing people close up on the screen feels more personal than I initially anticipated. The greatest challenge for me has been working with latency-age children and younger, who would like to be in person at the office. However, I have been happily pleased at how much we have been able to do over the screen, using a whiteboard for drawing or for games, and younger children have been showing me various beloved stuffed animals and toys, as well as their room décor and even other rooms of the house and outside. Seeing patients in their own space has been interesting and gives more knowledge of the person and their interests.

A new challenge occurred with the advent of Hurricane Isalas, which caused my house to lose power, as well as many of my patients' homes. Initially, it felt daunting, and overwhelming, and like the final blow to these difficult months! I was remembering the two weeks that we lost power after Hurricane Sandy!

We were able to move some of the sessions to phone, and lost many others. I was able to conduct sessions for a few days from my office, which got power back sooner than my house. Luckily, after a few days, we were able to get back to our regular sessions, and back on our telehealth routine.

I am waiting to see if we have spikes with the starting of school. If not, I will consider seeing some of my patients in the office. The issue of whether to renew my lease, which will be up in April, looms in the distance!

Resilience

Patricia Traynor, LCSW

None of us could have predicted a year like 2020. For me the year began with the excitement of being elected Co-President of the NYSSCSW Nassau Chapter. Then we began to hear warnings of a new virus running amuck overseas. By the middle of March it was here with a vengeance.

What had once been routine, scheduling appointments, meeting with clients, supervising staff, conferring with colleagues, now presented unprecedented challenges. The stress of working in one of the hardest hit areas in New York City, adjusting to constant changes in hospital protocols, seeing co-workers, staff and family members stricken with the virus, being isolated from family and friends, while navigating safe ways to see patients, took a considerable toll. Even commuting daily to work and functioning in an office setting demanded caution and constant vigilance. Yet with my professional and personal life and my familiar routines completely disrupted, I knew I still had professional responsibilities to my staff and the clients we care for.

COVID-19 may have disrupted our lives and routines, but it never broke our spirits. The pandemic created endless challenges over the past six months; faced with those challenges we found solutions and saw opportunities. Zoom conferences replaced in person meetings and provided a way to stay in touch with colleagues and family. At the mental health clinic where I work masks, gloves, gowns and face shields became our uniforms. Telehealth enabled the clinic to increase our capability to connect with patients throughout the Far Rockaway community. In the wake of the pandemic the Far Rockaway Arverne Non-Profit Coalition revived their mental health committee. I chair that committee, and we are bringing to the community awareness of the signs and symptoms of mental health issues, and knowledge to find appropriate services. No one knows what the future may bring, but as I look back over the last six months the one word that comes to mind is Resilience. Whatever comes our way, we'll manage, and we'll provide care for our clients. Because we are social workers, and that's what we do.

"We can't direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails." Thomas S. Monson

My Journey Through Covid

Linda Rose, LCSW

“The flu kills more people each year than Covid” was something I thought and said in February. How wrong I was. Never in a million years did I conceive what the reality would be. I am normally very solid and levelheaded, so this roller coaster of emotions I experienced was and is humbling and eye-opening.

As March came, it became more evident that my attitude towards Covid was not accurate. My eldest son was studying in Germany and as President Trump banned travel, I feared he would not be able to come home. My panic began. Thankfully he was able to come home, and almost everything began to shut down. It was surreal in the first few weeks as everything was cancelled and people in New York began to get sick and die. People I knew, people my clients knew, people my family knew. My practice at first went into shutdown as both myself and my clients tried to wrap our heads around what was happening and transition into tele sessions, then after about two weeks (end of March), it began to explode. I vacillated between enjoying the slower pace, getting all my closets in order, and having my husband and kids being home all of the time (although two work part time for supermarkets and that too was worrisome and stressful), My sister and her family didn't feel well, but didn't qualify to get tested. My elderly mom (89) got sick, was it Covid or her usual COPD seasonal illness? (she frequently gets sick during seasonal changes). My sisters and I discussed whether we would send her to the hospital or take the risk and allow her to stay home and possibly die at home. The thought of not being able to visit her or be with her if she would pass in a hospital was unbearable. At first I was quarantining myself since my son came from Europe, but my mom needed assistance as she was so sick. Masked and gloved, I had to help her shower, dress, change sheets, etc. Thankfully she got better.

As the death rates painfully rose, and people I knew or knew of began to die, panic developed into sadness and depression. Miraculously an email showed up advertising a spiritual webinar to help get through this dark time. It was this 8-week webinar named “Weathering the storm” that reminded me and taught how to utilize this horrendous time for growth. I began to reframe for myself and my clients the deeper meanings and lessons from the pandemic. I was able to see gratitude, opportunity, and hope. I simultaneously learned and taught my clients to ground, manage Covid anxiety, to be part of the solution, control what we can and to keep as safe.

My sister and her family tested positive for antibodies, so we arranged for my mom to have one as well and it turns out she tested positive for antibodies in June. How shocked I was that she did indeed had Covid and remained out of the hospital (being on oxygen and taking an anticoagulant saved her) while a father of my daughter's high school friend died. Who gets to live and who gets to die? Going to the cemetery around Father's Day, my kids and I were shocked to see the number of new graves. Many discussions with my emerging adult children around loss, gratitude for my mom's recovery and needing to keep safe. How to balance this need to keep safe with wanting to socialize, meet with friends and family?

My immediate family too got antibody tested and interestingly we were all negative, despite my closeness to my mom and my kids working in supermarkets. My masking up to protect my mom protected me from getting it from her! I tell this story to everyone to emphasize the importance and the positive outcomes of using a mask.

Six months after my callous statements about comparing Covid to the flu, I am more humbled, grateful, grounded and more connected to spirit, resulting in being a better person and therapist. My work is richer, deeper and more satisfying than ever. This rollercoaster ride is still not over, but I will continue to see opportunities in crisis and commit to growing. One of my favorite sayings is “don't throw the baby out with the bath water” and seeing the value through the darkness of Covid has seen me through.

Living Through Covid-19 Pandemic

Heidi Berr, LCSW

I stopped seeing patients “live” in my full time practice a few days prior to New York State officially shutting down in response to COVID hospitalizations rising. I remember feeling torn and confused about what to do, and at times wanting to use denial to convince myself all would be OK. By the third day of this I had a pit in my stomach as I approached my office door and readied myself to clean again in response to another day of seeing patients with the threat of contracting this lurking virus. That was my last “live day,” and I used it to contact each patient and discuss my decision to make my practice all phone and video sessions for the time being.

I hated feeling for those few days that I could actually be a threat to my patients’ health, or they to mine. The decision to shut down without knowing if insurances would allow for telehealth or pay equal to live sessions was scary; I felt pressured to maintain my same income so my husband and I could continue to help our two sons with their graduate school tuitions.

Surprisingly almost all my patients have continued with telehealth (doxy-me) sessions for their treatment. At first I was reluctant to begin with new patients through telehealth, and I did not take any child referrals as I didn’t feel I could treat young kids this way. After two months or so I began feeling more confident and developed a comfortable “style” of working this way....but it felt like two years. Until then although I knew my sessions were adequate I felt a sense of disconnection with myself as a clinician, and this made me feel very discouraged and pessimistic. The “what if’s” that were bubbling were very troublesome...What if we can’t go back to treating people live for a very long time?, What if I will no longer experience the gratification in my work I’m used to experiencing so frequently?

It seemed like all of a sudden, from one day to the next I began finding I was finally working with patients on a deeper level and watching them make break throughs, however I know it was actually building up to this. At the end of my first work day where I had a few “great” sessions, I literally wept with relief that this could be. Since then, I’ve been more willing to take referrals of young kids whom I’ve always enjoyed treating, as well as adults who don’t live close enough to ever come in person on a regular basis.

I very much look forward to when I feel safe enough to work with my patients in person again, but for now this is what we have and I believe we are all “unsung heroes” helping our patients as best as we can as we experience a parallel process of having so many of the same feelings of fear, disbelief, and loss and hopefully also a periodic sense of being able to count on ourselves to adjust and cope with trauma and uncertainty.

When the Epidemic Struck

Veronica Harkins, LCSW

When the epidemic first struck us back in March I wasn’t very familiar with video platforms we’ve come to depend on for professional and personal communications. Lacking confidence in navigating these things I decided to take a course on telehealth for psychotherapists. It helped me learn about lighting, helping clients create a private space to talk and making back up plans when the primary communication method fails. I’ve always worked out of a home office. So, I didn’t have to create any place new like many of my colleagues have had to do. However, my life partner has expressed feeling the need to create some private space for herself now that I’m home all of the time. I’m enjoying the chance to have more casual conversations with her during the day and the chance to share more mealtimes. A few of my clients are anxious to see me back in my office. It’s a place of safety and security for all of my clients who are dealing with trauma. For some who have trouble establishing boundaries being home with family members all the time is really difficult. Some people don’t have any privacy to talk time in their homes so they contact me from their cars. A lot of people are having trouble with the uncertainty of not knowing when it will be safe to turn to in office meetings. I’m not troubled by that myself as I’ve come to appreciate the advantages of telehealth sessions I believe I’ll try to keep this option even when not required by an epidemic. I hope that health insurance companies will understand the value and continue to fund telehealth into the future. It can be regarded as a new cool in our mental health toolbox.

View from a Teletherapist during Covid-19

Linda Feyder, LCSW

March 11th was the day my office went dark. The wooden cube calendar on my desk remains fixed on the date, like a monument to the day we all went into hiding, into the shelter of our homes, from a common enemy: Covid-19. My office has been the place where my clients became comfortable and trusting, a cocoon-like space where they have shared their deepest thoughts and feelings with me. As I was thrust into a virtual office, I wondered if that same connection would be possible. I wondered if the therapeutic bond with existing clients would weaken and if new clients would be able to form one at all.

I have often wished I could take a picture of each client in their virtual space and make a collage that would unite us in this experience and document this memory for myself. Of course I cannot. Images of them in their bedrooms, backyards, bathrooms, or front seats of their cars rather than on my office couch will remain with me forever. The computer screen turned bright and their faces appeared. We looked into each other's eyes and began. It has been messy: I have watched them struggle with children running in and out of the room, deliveries arriving at the wrong time and no strong WiFi signal in the parking spot outside their homes. They have lost people. They have been furloughed. And they have worried about the impact on their children. Our 50 minutes together have been the one weekly constant in a sea of change.

The new clients who had never met me in person before were more curious about my environment as they peered from their screens: "Is that a dog I hear?" "Is that office in your home?" "Do you live by yourself?" I realized that teletherapy began with a built-in distance: We see each other, but only a part of the picture framed by the computer screen. I don't see the total you and you don't see the total me. With a few new clients, I found that this distance made them feel safer to reveal more sensitive issues sooner than I'd expected. I wondered how they would feel later, when they saw me in person, and the real physical presence of each other lifted the buffer between me and the deepest secrets they shared.

One day the pandemic will be behind us and things will return to normal. Or will they? It is anyone's guess. In my practice, I am always reminded of the resilience of people. How quickly we adapt to change even when it's thrust upon us. For now, I am seeing many clients virtually and some in the office. The building that houses my office is empty of people, save a few accounting employees upstairs and the janitor, normally chatty, who waves hello to me from a distance in his surgical mask. My clients text me when they are outside and wait for my "all clear" to enter the lobby. They trickle in with their masks and hand sanitizer, looking like refugees relieved to come back.

How the Pandemic Affected Me Personally

Barbara Murphy, LCSW, BCD

As a solo practitioner in private practice, the pandemic simplified my work space by confining it to an office at home rather than traveling to schools, private homes and my office.

Prior to the pandemic, the geographic area I covered in a week spanned from Sands Point (North) to Bellmore (South), Mineola (West) to Farmingdale (East). The pandemic also presented new challenges for me in engaging (for the first time in my 40 year plus career) patients ranging in age from three years to 22 years and including two selective mutes online for play and talk therapy. The pandemic complicated my family life as I accepted my adult daughter back home after she lost a PR job in Manhattan and tried to hold on to an apartment in "Hospital Alley" and as I tried to protect my husband deemed at high risk due to his health issues. After taking some training in telemental health and helping my patients progress and their families cope, I am confident and determined to continue to work out of my home until it is deemed safe for me and my patients to return to an office setting.

Pandemic

Sandra Jo Lane, LCSW-R, BCD, CGP

On the 11th of March, after introducing our presenter at Long Island Employee Assistance Professionals Association (over which I am also currently presiding), I received a text from one of my daughters that she was needing to go to her day program. Checking Find Friends on my cell phone, I saw that she was at our house. This daughter has special needs and had just passed the first anniversary of direct and indirect brain bypass neurosurgeries that revascularized her brain, following the diagnosis of the very, very rare, progressive, incurable, and deadly Moyamoya — the Japanese words is for “puff of smoke“, which is what the angiogram of the stenosis looks like.

I was due to pick up my other daughter from the airport, as she was returning from a brief vacation with friends and had a dental appointment near the house that evening. Almost at the airport, her sister in tow, I learned that she had been summoned to work. I switched the girls’ dental appointments and after each was through, I drove my traveler back to her apartment in New York City. Thursday was a full workday and by Friday, I offered to retrieve my young traveler, that she might more safely quarantine with us. On that day, I saw no patients in person. That Friday the 13th, became the first day of a new era. I have worked with the population I’d been serving, and have added a few new individuals who came through referrals. I’ve kept busy.

A leak in a worn pipe lead to some home repairs which lead to some renovation and I’m writing from a nearly finished (yes, yes, I know it’s never finished) portion of my home. I’ve got a son who is residing in the beautifully safe, ever cautious Vermont. He is managing his work responsibilities in a completely reimagined way. His time at International Academic Competitions now includes no travel, and is in sharp contrast with major globetrotting in years past.... My other son continues his work as a designer. The traveler is back home, as of the start of October, and she is studying law remotely. My super champion is continuing to heal.

My patients too, are thriving despite this pandemic. Somehow, the immediacy of this threat has made the necessity of an introspective approach more evident than before. Never thought zoom or FaceTime or the telephone would have as prominent a position in my life, but grateful that they do.

Stay SAFE! Better times will be here soon!

My Reflections on the Pandemic

Carline Napolitano, LCSW

Six months into this pandemic, I’m amazed at how I and my clients have adapted. I’ve seen clients in their cars, closets and backyards. Gone on Zoom walks with them through their neighborhood when their homes offered no privacy. Most recently while wearing masks, I’ve seen a few clients on my deck. Surprised by a well of emotion arising, as we laid eyes on each other in person for the first time in six months.

During this pandemic, I’ve assisted at six trainings with an average 65 participants. I led afternoon small group experiential exercises and my groups were open, vulnerable and equally surprised by their ability to drop into feelings via Zoom.

Along with amazement comes tremendous losses, sadness, anger and fear. During these trainings, riots were taking place outside some participant’s homes. Tending to the world and reality became equally important to the learning that was taking place. Discussions on race and privilege were added to the agenda with urgency and sometimes it went well and sometimes not.

I’ve been a clinician for 30 years and the world and our work has never felt more challenging. We, along with our clients face physical, emotional, social chaos. I closed my office and I’m not sure where or when I’ll resume face to face sessions with regularity.

Our self-care has never been more important than now, as we help clients navigate the same world we face each day. I’ve been disheartened by much and remain in awe of the human spirit of my clients emerging with resilience.

Covid Eexperiences

Sheila Rindler, LCSW

Like many of us, I have been doing mostly phone sessions with clients during this pandemic. About two thirds of my client caseload continued having weekly or bi-monthly sessions with me and preferred sessions on the phone. I have always done phone sessions for specific reasons with clients so it certainly hasn't been unfamiliar, but not totally satisfying. It has been challenging to try to continue doing meaningful therapeutic work on their issues while only listening, aware I could be missing visual cues, and also knowing that I shared many of the same fears and concerns regarding the Pandemic and its limitations on all of us. During my past experience working during Hurricane Sandy, I've had that same feeling of "being in the same boat" with clients. Now....I also knew some of the same fears, restrictions about seeing our children, grandchildren, occasional trapped feelings, anxiety, and gaining the "Covid TEN pounds!"!!!! (Baking was soothing!) And yet I still could be there for them somehow.

My greatest support to get through this hard time has been meetings with colleagues on Zoom. Challenging at first but then it become more familiar, like any change of routine. I have been in two support groups through the Nassau chapter of the Clinical Social Workers....a small peer group, and the Aging Committee meetings of the Society. It has helped enormously to be able to share our feelings and experiences of working during this difficult time, as well as sharing valuable practical tips such as technological information, how to collect copays on Venmo, etc.

I accepted a new referral right at the very beginning of Covid, who wanted to Zoom, since she was already using that platform at her job as an art teacher. Not surprisingly, she was a young woman, much more comfortable with the technology than I was, and helped me to do it the first time! She was such an easy engaging client to work with that I didn't feel any difficulty beginning a good working relationship without ever actually seeing her in person. In the earliest Zoom sessions with her, I struggled with what room to talk from, showing what background, keeping all noise down in the home, and having privacy. It was more of a challenge since I had moved out of my own home with an office during Covid, to allow my son and his family to use my house, since their Brooklyn apartment was so small. Early on during a session, my partner sneezed loudly, walking near my closed door and I was very upset! The client never heard it but I realized that these normal life changes of a therapist going through Covid were not affecting the client's feeling of my being there for them at all, even though they also missed not being able to come to my office physically. I found myself more tired from phone sessions somehow, even though I was working less hours a week, probably from my own stress of the pandemic on me.

During the summer, I had a few in person sessions with a client who was willing to come to the shaded part of the backyard, in a private corner. It was a pleasure to see his face, and him, mine.....even though properly distanced. One of my oldest clients of 89 has hearing problems, and the phone sessions with her have been a challenge. I had to stop my home visiting of my client with MS, due to the fragility of her condition of course, but she has been able to continue on the phone. And this week, I had the pleasure of holding a first session with a new client outside my own office on the patio.. The client was a 79 year old woman who had requested to meet me just once so that she could see who she was talking to in future phone sessions (not able to do a visual session or the phone of computer). As she started to tear up recounting a painful issue, I wondered if I would have detected it on a regular phone session.

But all in all, I feel very grateful to be able to have continued working during this Pandemic, for the benefit of helping my clients, and in so doing, also helping myself!

Difficult Times

Charles Greco M.A.,CSW-R,BCD

I just thought of how difficult these times are both personally and professionally. New colleagues face challenges getting the CSW and more so with the "R" privileges. This virus has been so awful to the people we serve on so many levels and challenges us in our practices. Networking with colleagues, self care and limit setting are so important. Please all be safe and make sure your work environment is safe for all.

Nassau Chapter Committees

Book Club Committee

The Book Club meets annually to discuss a book relevant to clinical social work practice. You may check the Nassau Chapter Calendar for information about this program. For further information about the Book Club contact the committee chairperson,

Susan Kahn LCSW, BCD
(516) 482-1269
shkahn18@optonline.net

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee works on attracting new members to the Society and to provide opportunities for networking among members of the Chapter. For further information about the Membership Committee or to volunteer to serve on this committee, you may contact the committee co-chairpersons

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Mentorship Group

The "Mentorship Group" offers new social workers an opportunity to network, build skills, and discuss clinical practice issues in a supportive and collaborative environment. The goal is to assist in the transition from graduate student to new professional and help support professionals already working in the field. If you are interested, please contact the chairperson.

Jennifer Shapiro-Lee
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NewsNotes

The NewsNotes is the Chapter's newsletter (Winter and Fall editions). Members can post professional activities they have participated in, such as books written, lectures or courses given, or honors received and can submit clinical articles for publication. For further information about the NewsNotes, or to write an article for the NewsNotes, contact:

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Program Committee

The Program Committee develops, coordinates and implements the Chapter's annual education programs, including bi-monthly educational workshops, the Chapter's annual education conference and other educational activities.

Ellie Perlman, LCSW
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Scholarship Committee

Catherine Faith Kappenberg
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Website Committee

The Website Committee makes sure that the Society's website remains current and responsive to the needs of the Society. Each chapter has a chapter website coordinator who is a member of the Society's Website Committee and is responsible to enter their chapter's news and events onto their chapter's web page on the Society website. If you have any chapter news to be placed on the Nassau Chapter web page or any chapter events to be placed on the Nassau Chapter Calendar on the Society website you may contact the chapter website coordinator

Jannette Urciuoli, LCSW
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Committee on Aging

The Committee on Aging is concerned with how the issue of aging impacts your clients, their families and yourself. Discussions include topics such as physical, mental and social issues and stereotypes of aging viewed through various therapeutic perspectives. For further information contact

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Public Relations

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Suffolk Committees**Chapter Committees****Membership Committee**

The Membership Committee works to attract new members to the Society and to provide opportunities for networking among members of the Chapter. For further information about the Membership Committee or to volunteer to serve on this committee, you may contact the committee chairperson.

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Mentorship Committee

The Mentorship Committee provides opportunities for MSW students, recent MSW graduates and MSW members who are early in their clinical social work careers, to partake in mentorship groups where they can network, discuss topics pertinent to their development as clinical social workers and can receive guidance, support, nurturance and advice to further their professional development as clinical social workers. For further information about the Mentorship Committee, to join a mentorship group or to volunteer to serve on this committee or to lead a mentorship group, you may contact the committee chairperson.

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MEMBERS' DOINGS

Richard Belson, DSW, LCSW, writes in Jun. I was invited to do a 2 hour Webinar on "Short Term Couple Therapy" for Nefesh International- an international group of Orthodox Jewish Therapists.

Jennifer Shapiro-Lee writes that she spoke on September 23rd for Ellevote Women's Network about the importance of decreasing the stigma and silence around mental health issues. She also wrote an article for Choosing Therapy about Meditation and Depression which is being published.

NEW MEMBERS

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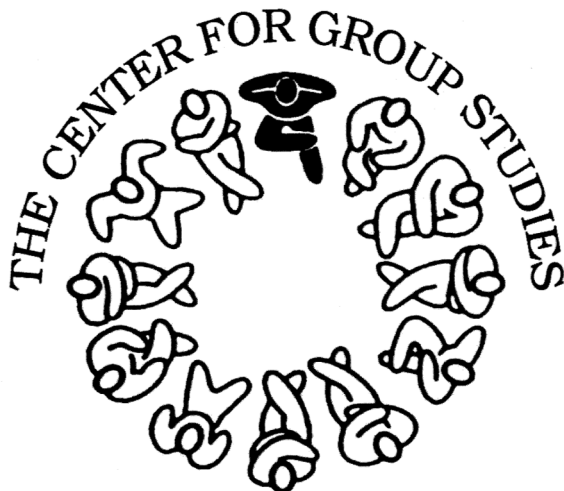
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