

Book Review / Compte rendu

Frisbie, S. (2020). *A Therapist's Guide to Treating Eating Disorders in a Social Media Age*. W. W. Norton and Company. ISBN: 978-0-393-71445-6, 283 pp.

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ABSTRACT

Eating disorders and other “sub-clinical” problems such as disordered eating and body shame/dissatisfaction grow more prevalent in our society. This is particularly true since the advent of COVID-19 changed our social landscape, leading to increases in isolation and anxiety and in the use of technology to work, to connect, and to live. Social media in this age present both barriers and possibilities for mental health and identity development, particularly for individuals who suffer from eating disorders and related problems. In her seminal first book, Shauna Frisbie deftly weaves through each of these topics, creating a tapestry for both novice and expert clinicians to view and understand how social media consumption can be assessed, dismantled, and harnessed to help clients who struggle with disordered eating. Guided by the central topics of selfhood and identity development and by the techniques of phototherapy, Dr. Frisbie creates a compelling story that draws on both research and case studies from her practice.

RÉSUMÉ

Les troubles alimentaires et autres problèmes cliniquement peu apparents comme l'alimentation désordonnée et la honte/insatisfaction à l'égard de son image corporelle continuent de croître dans notre société. Cela est particulièrement le cas depuis que l'avènement de la COVID-19 a modifié notre paysage social, menant à un plus grand isolement, plus d'anxiété et au recours à la technologie pour le travail, les relations, et la vie. Notre époque de réseaux sociaux comporte à la fois des obstacles et des possibilités en matière de santé mentale et de développement de l'identité, surtout en ce qui concerne les personnes qui souffrent de troubles alimentaires et d'autres problèmes connexes. Dans son premier ouvrage majeur, Shauna Frisbie navigue habilement parmi tous ces sujets, créant ainsi une sorte de court-pointe à l'intention des cliniciens, aussi bien novices que chevronnés, afin de leur permettre de mieux comprendre dans quelle mesure on peut évaluer, démonter, et exploiter la consommation des réseaux sociaux pour aider les clientes et les clients aux prises

avec des troubles de l'alimentation. Guidée par les sujets centraux de la conscience de soi et du développement de l'identité, ainsi que par des techniques de thérapie photographique, la D^{re} Frisbie crée une histoire captivante qui s'inspire à la fois de la recherche et d'études de cas tirés de sa propre pratique.

In her well-researched and informative book, Shauna Frisbie draws on her extensive clinical experience of treating individuals with eating disorders in order to highlight the many ways that social media constrains and impacts identity development. As a professor of clinical mental health counselling and a clinician in private practice, Frisbie brings a wealth of knowledge to the eating disorders field. In *A Therapist's Guide to Treating Eating Disorders in a Social Media Age*, Frisbie details how clinicians can approach assessing and addressing the impact of social media on clients who suffer from disordered eating. She highlights current research, best practices, and a number of therapeutic approaches, including a focus on phototherapy techniques.

The book is divided into 13 chapters and two appendices that span a number of topics ranging from a brief history of photography to current neuroscience research to theories of identity development. The writing style is easily accessible, even when complex topics are introduced, and case examples are provided in most chapters. In the first three chapters, central ideas are presented: (a) eating disorders often interfere with identity development and can lead to the creation of problematic self-narratives, (b) social media can impact both identity development and the creation and maintenance of disordered eating, and (c) clinicians can tap into the power of visual content by using phototherapy techniques to bridge not only visual information and stories but also emotional, historical, and embodied self-knowledge.

In the chapters that follow, case studies are used to show how social media use can be assessed in session as well as specific phototherapy techniques that can be used to explore family dynamics, identity development (including problematic beliefs or patterns), preferred narratives, and possibilities for the future. In later chapters, Frisbie returns to an exploration of social media use and how certain practices such as the creation and posting of selfies can impact one's sense of self. She highlights how these practices can be problematic but also healing when used in the context of therapy to promote exploration and the emergence of preferred stories. Frisbie draws on her experiences as a practitioner and as an educator, showing how the ideas that she presents are salient not only to those with eating disorders but also to all people moving through the challenges of identity development, struggling with body image, or simply trying to find their place in the world. Interrelated concepts such as belonging, connection, privacy, and anonymity are touched on in order to show how social media can constrain us in unhealthy ways or outright harm us but can also create opportunities for growth if

harnessed appropriately. Concrete suggestions, case examples, theory, and research serve to guide the reader through these concepts and their application in therapy.

I particularly appreciate the focus on different theories and therapies, including narrative therapy, eye-movement desensitization and reprocessing, cognitive behavioural therapy, and phototherapy, along with practical ideas for incorporating these into counselling with clients. In one particular case study, the gestalt “empty chair” technique is adapted for a phototherapy exercise, demonstrating how a skilled clinician can draw from a range of interventions and tailor their approach to fit client needs and preferences. A number of different phototherapy techniques are detailed, including the use of family photo albums (along with a helpful list of questions one might ask clients to explore these), the creation of art using photos both taken and “found” (e.g., in magazines or on social media), and the structuring of a timeline based on photos that tell one’s story over the years, aiding in understanding identity development and self-narratives. Other interventions include the exploration of viewed social media content (including pro-eating disorder content) and the externalization of a client’s eating disorder through photo taking and narrative inquiry. My one minor complaint in reading this book involves the lack of photos, especially as the author expounds on the power of visual images to move us. It would have been helpful to see examples of phototherapy projects along with descriptions of the case studies.

I believe that his book can be useful to any helping professional working with clients impacted by disordered eating, problematic social media use, or issues related to identity development, as well as to educators in this field. While the focus, of course, is on individuals with eating disorders, the central concepts touched on in this book are highly relevant to a wider range of clients and the problems they bring to therapy. It will be of particular use to clinicians interested in incorporating phototherapy into their practice or to clinicians who already draw from this approach in refining their understanding and techniques.

About the Author

Hillary Sharpe works in private practice and teaches graduate-level courses in counselling psychology at City University of Seattle (Calgary campus) and at Athabasca University. Her areas of interest and expertise include helping clients address trauma and disordered eating, the use of somatic therapies, art therapy, and animal-assisted therapy, particularly equine-facilitated counselling.

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