



Reclaiming Intimacy in a Digital Age: Developing Relational Strategies for Families, Couples, and Their Therapists



Todd Essig, Ph.D.

9:00 am to 4:30 pm, Saturday, April 27, 2019

Shipley Auditorium, Newton Wellesley Hospital, 2014 Washington Street, Newton, MA

Technology's influence on human relationships has become ubiquitous. No intimate relationship remains unaffected by what we do on and with screens. When families, friends, and couples gather, multiple interactive screens are typically involved. People now text instead of talking to each other; sext, or access online pornography, instead of touching each other; and video chat instead of visiting. Even psychotherapy, in all its forms, is increasingly influenced by some type of screen relation. Sometimes screens enter the therapy as a topic, sometimes as a problem to be addressed, and sometimes as the treatment setting. As therapists, we are confronted with what this all means and what to do about it. What are the gains? What are the losses? And what can we do to maximize the former and minimize the latter?

In this interactive workshop Todd Essig, a pioneer in understanding the psychological consequences of technology, will provide attendees with a clinically-focused and historically-grounded framework for understanding the current intersection of relationships and technology. Dr. Essig's framework is also designed to adapt to the uncertainties of future developments such as robotics and other forms of artificial intimacy, the other "AI." With lively examples and demonstrations, this workshop will empower attendees to develop their own strategies for relating to, through and with technology, applicable to both treatment relationships with patients and to the relationships patients bring to treatment.

Todd Essig, Ph.D., is a Training and Supervising Psychoanalyst at the William Alanson White Institute and faculty in the adult certificate program in psychoanalysis. He has served on the editorial boards for *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* and the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* and recently co-edited, along with Gillian Isaacs Russell, a special issue of *Psychoanalytic Perspectives* on technology. For 16 years, until 2009, he was Director and Founder of The Psychoanalytic Connection where he developed numerous innovative uses of information technologies for mental health professionals. In the aftermath of 9/11 he helped organize and served as Board Chair for the New York Disaster Counseling Coalition (NYDCC). He currently writes "Managing Mental Wealth" for *Forbes* where he covers the intersection of technology, public life and private experience. His clinical practice is in New York City where he treats individuals and couples, almost all of whom come to his office.

PARTICIPANTS:

This program is open to all PCFINE members, other interested mental health professionals and students. It is intended for those with a beginner, intermediate, or advanced level of knowledge and experience.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:

At the conclusion of this program the participants will be able to:

1. Describe a model for intimate relationships suitable for understanding the influence of technology.

2. Outline three features of technologically-mediated relationships that differentiate them from physically co-present relating.
3. Define “technoference” and describe its primary influence on parent-child interactions.
4. List four motives driving online dating behavior other than trying to find a date or a mate.
5. Describe the problems with using an addiction model to diagnose and treat excessive and problematic Internet over-use.
6. Outline three principles of psychodynamic treatment (be it with families, couples or individuals) fundamentally altered in remote, technologically-mediated treatment contexts.
7. Articulate the “state-of-the-art” understanding of the relationship between childhood well-being and online behavior.

REFERENCES:

Essig, T., Trub, L., and Magaldi, D. (2018). “Technology, intimacy, and the simulation of intimacy” in *Intimacy: Clinical, Cultural, Digital and Developmental Perspectives*, G. Kanwal and S. Akhtar (Eds), Routledge.

Essig, T., Turkle, S., and Isaacs Russell, G., (2018). “Sleepwalking Towards Artificial Intimacy: How Psychotherapy Is Failing The Future.” Download from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/toddessig/2018/06/07/sleepwalking-towards-artificial-intimacy-how-psychotherapy-is-failing-the-future/>

Isaacs Russell, G. (2015). *Screen Relations: The Limits of Computer-Mediated Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy*. London: Karnac.

Lombard, M., & Jones, M. T. (2013). Telepresence and sexuality: A review and a call to scholars. *Human Technology: An Interdisciplinary Journal on Humans in ICT Environments*, 9(1), 22-55.

Magaldi, D., Appel, R., & Berler, M. (in press). Adolescence and Social Media Use. In S. Hupp & J. Jewell (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Child and Adolescent Development*, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

McDaniel, B. T., & Radesky, J. S. (2018). Technoference: Parent distraction with technology and associations with child behavior problems. *Child Development*, 89(1), 100-109.

Turkle, S. (2015). *Reclaiming conversation: The power of talk in a digital age*. New York, NY: Penguin Press.

CANCELLATION POLICY:

Full refund if notice of cancellation received by April 17, 2019.

CONTINUING EDUCATION:

PCFINE is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. PCFINE maintains responsibility for the program and its contents. Social Workers, Licensed Mental Health Counselors, and LMFT’s may call 781-433-0906 or email pcfine1934@gmail.com for CE information.

DIRECTIONS AND PARKING:

Directions to Newton Wellesley Hospital can be found at www.nwh.org. Parking is available at the hospital. Woodland T station (D line) is about two blocks from the hospital.

For information about PCFINE, and in order to register online or download this form, please visit our website at www.pcfine.org.



PRE-REGISTRATION RECOMMENDED:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Fee enclosed (circle one):

- PCFINE members:** \$120 early bird registration; \$150 after 4/10/19
- Non-members:** \$140 early bird registration; \$170 after 4/10/19
- Grad Students (w/ID):** \$50

A pre-paid \$10 parking voucher (a discount from usual rates) is available with pre-registration by April 23, 2019. If you wish to purchase a parking voucher, please add \$10.00 to your registration total.

Please send form and check payable to PCFINE to: PCFINE, P.O. Box 920781, Needham, MA 02492