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## Lonely Adolescents Who Never Have to be Alone

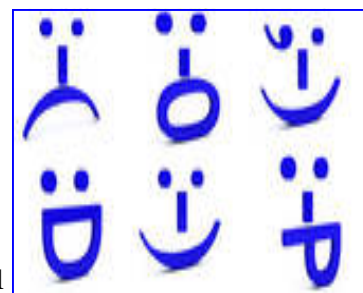
As I sat across from one of my 17-year-old patients a few years ago, I watched him program our next appointment into his cell phone. (It's leaps and bounds more sophisticated than mine.) He said he had a countdown timer on his phone that told precisely how many days, hours, and minutes he had left until high school graduation. I asked, "What else can you do with that thing?" He replied that he could get me some stock quotes if I were interested, along with any current national news. What a sense of power and apparent security this gave him. In his hand he had access to a vast amount of personal and global information. He could be "connected" to something or someone at any time he chose.

More recently I sat across from a 16-year-old who spoke about being in "constant" contact with her friends. Well aware of her excessive use of text messages and her Facebook account, I explored further: "What do you do by yourself?" She thought for some time and said, "Nothing, I am always talking to my friends except when I sleep and sometimes I fall asleep talking with them online or texting." She giggles. Then she stopped to think for a moment. "Wow", she said, "I never thought about how much I do that". Even when she does her homework or draws or listens to music she is simultaneously involved with texting, instant messaging or updating her Facebook. Lots of teens do this.

After almost two decades of working with adolescents I am challenged more than ever to rework my understanding of them. Technology, globalization and changes in how the nuclear family relates present more complications for the kids nowadays then when we grew up, yet it is during the teen years that kids really begin to move into adulthood. The late Erik Erikson (1950) characterized "personal identity formation" as the major task of the adolescent period. In plain English, kids at this age are trying to figure out who they are. Additionally, recent brain research shows that the "thinking" part of the brain (prefrontal cortex) continues to evolve into the twenties. Cognitively, teens begin to develop what Piaget (1958) called "formal operations:" the ability to think more abstractly and understand how to think logically. So what does this all mean nowadays?

In my practice these days I see teens that are more disconnected from their "selves" than ever. These are largely intelligent kids who are more worldly and tolerant of diversity. They have been exposed to privilege and knowledge that surpass their ability to process it. They have hurried parents and are often overextended themselves with academics and extra-curricular activities. Erikson believed that adolescents need "down" time to work on their personal identities. What I see is kids who are lonely and in desperate need of having meaningful contact with adults and peers. Worse yet, they don't know it and yet feel indescribable despair.

...Continued on page 5



*Ask you kids what  
these are...*

## IIGP Newsbites

***Dana Locniskar, longtime friend of the Institute, incoming Trustee on our Board,*** was recently honored by Barron's, a weekly financial Newsletter. A stockbroker at Merrill Lynch, Dana was named one of Barron's top 100 Financial Advisors for 2009. This is the fourth time he has been so honored. Way to go Dana!



Dana Locniskar



***Jim Hiller, owner and operator of Hiller Markets, incoming Trustee on our Board of Directors*** was trained as an attorney. Jim began sailing in 1973. Over his years of sailing, he has come to see the metaphor of "boat captain" as fitting many aspects of life for all of us. We are happy to have him "aboard" to help the Institute "navigate" these stormy times.

***Natan HarPaz, PhD, IIGP Faculty member,*** was very pleased to have his son visit from Israel last month. Michael, who resides in Israel with his wife, came to perform "live in concert" at Congregation Shir Tikvah in Troy. Natan who has played mandolin for years, played a couple of numbers onstage with his son.



Michael HarPaz

***Leora Bar-Levav, MD, IIGP Faculty Member,*** is having mixed feelings lately. She is sending her oldest son, Daniel off to Indiana University this fall. For years, Daniel has helped manage food and beverage issues during 28-hour-psychotherapy marathon sessions in her office. Pursuing a career in business, Daniel aspires to managing bigger things in his future. Go Hoosiers!

## Help Us Train Therapists



From left: Pamela Torracco, ACSW; Natan HarPaz, PhD; Paul P. Shultz, ACSW; Leora Bar-Levav, MD; Ronald J. Hook, ACSW; David A. Baker, ACSW; Marcia B. Stein, ACSW.

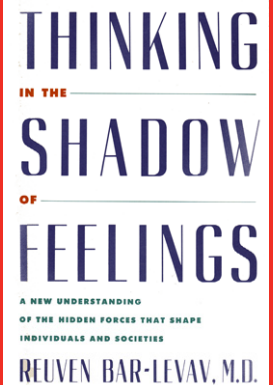
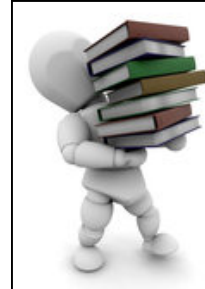
Before the year is out, please consider a contribution to our Annual Fund (self-addressed envelope is attached to this Newsletter). IIGP is a 501 (c)(3) qualified non-profit organization that relies solely on the generosity of people like you. Founded in the 1970's, we have trained dozens of professionals in the practice of Integrated Individual and Group psychotherapy. However, a "quick fix" focus has become popular, and treatment mostly by medications (many advertised on T.V.) is now wide-spread. Hoping to buck this trend, we need your financial help to promote our training program. Psychotherapy leads to real change in ways medications cannot.

## Reflections-

More than twenty-years after its publication, the words of our founder are considered from today's perspective:

*A Brief Guide to Good Parenting* (pp. 217-219) lists four basic principles to follow in raising kids. As kids go back to school this September, it might be worth it to us parents to review Number Four on the list: ***“Attend to thinking.”*** As Dr. Bar-Levav writes, ***“When kids are born, they are a bundle of feelings. They can’t describe what they are experiencing, and they certainly can’t think anything through!”*** (p. 217)

Reuven Bar-Levav, M.D.



So how does a child learn how to think? Doesn't it just sort of happen naturally? Certainly learning how to talk and express what we feel is a critical first step. But just because we can talk about something doesn't mean we can think. We all know the experience of listening to someone go on and on about something they are very passionate about. But sometimes, if we listen carefully, what they're saying doesn't make sense. For example, they may contradict themselves but not seem to know it. And if the contradiction is pointed out, they don't seem to care.



In order to learn how to think, we need more than the ability to speak. We need the ability to recognize what we're feeling, and to put those feelings into "cold storage" for awhile so we can think clearly. Many of us don't realize how much trouble we cause ourselves because we don't put our feelings aside, at least temporarily. But kids, and even many adults, don't want to put their feelings aside.

*“Children do not know how to think, and they generally do not want to learn how.”* (p. 218) An important part of teaching kids how to think is addressed in Number

Three of the Guide to Good Parenting: *“Attend to Reality. No matter what feelings the child experiences and expresses, they cannot and should not be the basis of any action”* (Bar-Levav, p. 218). But this can be quite a challenge for parents, especially when a kid tries our patience. Parents also must not act on the basis of how they feel. *“Cool judgment must guide decision-making and action at all times.”* Sometimes kids will be angry at us if we don't go along with their feelings.

Kids—three-year-olds and thirteen-year-olds alike—regularly “test” their parents. “Will she let me get away with this?” Sometimes they want us to lose our temper and act “crazy”. Then they can dismiss what we say because—after all—“Mom’s out of her tree!” None of this is conscious, of course. But, kids unknowingly want us to buy into the same system they naturally live by: “If it feels good, do it. If you don’t like it, don’t do it.”

Our patience can wear thin. But if we can keep a cool head and hold to reasonable expectations, we will eventually be pleased with the results. Maybe not today. Or tomorrow. Or even in a month or two. In fact, one father didn't see what a good job he had done until his son was thirty years old!

—Paul P. Shultz, ACSW

### ***Thinking in the Shadow of Feelings*** (1988: Simon and Schuster)

The founder of the Institute, Dr. Reuven Bar-Levav, wrote the book *Thinking in the Shadow of Feelings*. The book defines the theory of human motivation that guides our clinical work at IIGP. Each issue of *INSIGHTS* includes a brief discussion of an excerpt from the book. The book is available in its entirety on our website [www.iigp.org](http://www.iigp.org).

## Psychotherapy vs. Positive Thinking

Can “positive thinking” help just as much, or even more than psychotherapy? After all, doesn’t psychotherapy focus on “negative” stuff? And “positive thinking” is a whole lot cheaper and more convenient than psychotherapy!

Recently, Joanne Wood, Ph.D., of the University of Waterloo (Canada) tested positive thinking in an experiment. What she found is that positive thinking can actually do harm to some people. Those with low self-esteem often find positive comments about themselves so unbelievable that it just makes their negative feelings worse.

Psychotherapy isn’t “cheerleading.” It’s a scientifically developed form of medical treatment. Poor self-esteem is an emotional illness that responds well to properly conducted psychotherapy. Here at the Institute our training program makes this an important part of our approach. And, we are constantly pursuing new and better ways to treat damaged self-esteem.

-Paul P. Shultz, ACSW  
Editor

## Training Alert!

Time is running out for those interested in the Institute’s unique post-graduate training program for psychotherapists. Our fall semester begins September 9th as our CE and CME certified Tuesday Seminars resume meeting. (See back page for schedule.) Even before the semester has officially began, two trainees have started on some of the coursework for our two-semester introductory program by viewing and discussing some of our training DVDs. Please call Annette at 248-353-5333 or email her at <annette@iigp.org>. She can enroll you in the Tuesday Seminar and send you the brochure that describes our training program in depth.



## Clinical Workshops

In addition to our traditional Tuesday Seminars we are now offering a series of workshops designed to address the concerns of clinicians regarding patients and some of the clinical difficulties they may present. In these workshops we provide a setting in which to discuss these difficulties and provide information and guidance on the specific clinical issues. The Challenging Clinical Issues Workshops are as follows:

Why doesn't My Patient Change?	September 23, 2009	7:30-9:30 PM	\$25.00
The Silent Patient	October 6, 2009	7:30-9:30 PM	\$25.00
Faith and Psychotherapy	October 27, 2009	7:30-9:30 PM	\$25.00

Please contact IIGP for more information or to register at 248-353-5333 or visit us at [www.iigp.org](http://www.iigp.org). You can find these workshops listed under the Continuing Education tab.

**“The single most important thing that makes psychotherapy a success is the character of the therapist... this is the core of our training program.”**

**Leora Bar-Levav, MD**

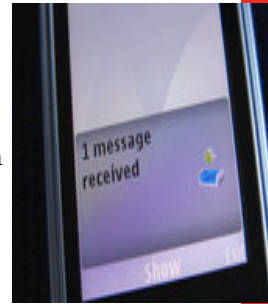




## Lonely Adolescents Who Never Have to be Alone

(...continued from page 1)

When I say “meaningful,” I mean they need to have a sense of being heard and seen. They need opportunities to talk over and think about ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Instead, teens are having more and more contact in the virtual world. They want to see themselves as independent from their parents and attached to their peer group. However, they ward off their fear and loneliness by connecting via cell phones and laptops. These avenues are often used as a way of clinging to others in an anonymous way.



They can provide a false sense of being constantly wanted and connected. But this does not help the adolescent develop crucial building blocks for a “sense of self.” Building blocks like learning how to be alone and developing healthy ways to self-soothe. Constructing an identity in the teen years requires repeated experiences with adults and peers where thoughts and feelings are talked over and then put in a meaningful context. I believe this has to be done largely in a face-to-face interpersonal context. This makes for less superficial relating, fewer distortions of reality, tolerance of anxiety, and an overall healthier attachment to others. It makes for a less-lonely kid.

Certainly, the virtual world offers avenues for teen growth as well. Blogging can promote self reflection, creativity, and promotion of literacy through storytelling. Also, understanding how to access information and use it and being able to stay connected to peers who are remotely located are potent and positive aspects. But parents need to be involved and knowledgeable about how their teens are using these tools. Boundaries on screen usage and cell phone access are a must. There is plenty of good information on setting behavioral contracts and educating yourself about the misuses of these powerful and seductive forms or relating. It's easy to find on the internet!

**~Tammy Pingatore, LMSW, has practiced psychotherapy with adolescents, families and young adults for over twenty years. She is located in Birmingham, Michigan.**

## 2010 and IIGP~



We at IIGP are finally jumping on the bandwagon heading out into cyberspace!

We are hoping for many of you receiving this newsletter via our USPS will opt for electronic delivery.

If you would like to be a part of our “green” efforts and would like your copy of *Insights* sent to your inbox electronically please email Annette at [annette@iigp.org](mailto:annette@iigp.org). Simply type “add me to your electronic distribution list.” She will be happy to

place you on that list and you will begin receiving your copy of *Insights* via email beginning with the next delivery scheduled for Winter 2010.

Thank you!

All seminars are held at 29600 Northwestern Hwy, Ste 100, Southfield, MI. The Institute offers these classes for physicians, psychologists and social workers. IIGP is approved by the Michigan State Medical Society and by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for physicians and psychologists. IIGP maintains responsibility for the programs and its content. Our programs are approved by the Michigan Social Work Continuing Education Collaborative for Social Workers for Continuing Education. **Reservations are required.** Please send an email to [seminars@iigp.org](mailto:seminars@iigp.org) or call (248) 353-5333 for reservations or for special accommodations.

#### General Information

**Working Effectively with Your Psychiatric Consultants**  
December 1, 8 & 15 • 12:15 pm - 1:30pm • \$50.00

**Introduction to Integrated Individual and Group Psychotherapy**  
November 10 • 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm • Free of Charge

**Music and the Brain—The “Music” of Psychotherapy**  
November 3, 10 & 17 • 12:15 pm - 1:30pm • \$50.00

**Working With the Ego Boundaries of the Borderline Patient: Transference and Counter-transference Issues**  
October 6, 13 & 20 • 12:15 pm - 1:30 pm • \$50.00

**Introduction to Integrated Individual and Group Psychotherapy**  
September 29 • 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm • Free of Charge

**The Power of Secrets**  
September 8, 15 & 22 • 12:15pm - 1:30pm • \$50.00

## TUESDAY SEMINARS



A MICHIGAN NON-PROFIT

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