

The Net Connection
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Well, Hello TNC-ers,

Y'know how some families update other friends and family regarding the activities and opportunities of the previous year in a Christmas/New Year letter? Perhaps the timing of this is reflecting on the year nearly past, and looking forward to the new opportunities to come? Well, I am pursuing this idea closer to the Valentine period. What is your hunch about the timing of this? I think I shall allow your imagination to work with this one....

I'm sitting here with my morning coffee, counting my blessings, and grateful that God allows me to be a part of a group where I meet other competent professionals, who are focused on cultivating their skill en route to serving dear clients. And I am pondering...reflecting. Four years ago, I was relatively new to town, did not know many other professionals. When I met another counselor, not only would I inquire about theoretical orientation, I would inquire about who he/she referred to for issues in which he/she did not specialize. You likely remember the rest of this scene: I was shocked at the lack of continuity in the field, and craved to help bring some cohesion to our professional community. About this time, I met Glynda Corley, LPC-S, who asked me in the thickest Southern accent (yes, I think her accent is thicker than mine...), who inquired ever-so-gently, "Well, Honey, what do you suppose we ought to do about this?" With raised eyebrows, almost "deer-in-the-headlights" look, I shrugged my shoulders, "I have no idea, Glynda, what do you suppose we ought to do about this?" And I could begin to see the metaphorical wheels turning behind her eyes. Also near this time, Conrad Sloat, LPC-S, began to echo my concern re: the lack of cohesion and began to ask the pivotal questions that led to the synergistic conversations with Glynda and me. So, four years ago this month (there is another clue about the timing of this family letter), Conrad and Glynda and I began to meet on Sunday afternoons and dream about helping our local counselors, through which we would also reap great benefit. Who knew that our dream would evolve into such a beautiful group of dedicated professionals, who are invested in each others' professional growth and increasing the quality of service that we offer to the dear souls around us?

And while sitting here with my morning coffee, I am remembering our original goals, and going through an encouraging inventory of our journey toward meeting our goals. Our original goals included:

1. Composed of mental health professionals with solid, evidenced-based theoretical approaches,
2. Organized for educational purposes, & meet regularly for Continuing Education units for members,
3. Support and encourage peer supervision,
4. Support the greater Round Rock community and surrounding areas through referring clients to receive competent care within the local network of mental health providers, and
5. Educate the community regarding mental health and relevant mental health issues.

And just in the last year we have made significant strides in these items:

1. Membership grew from 43 to 56.
2. Continuing Education continues to be a source of vitality for membership, providing a total of 16.5 CEUs to our members this year. Nine months we had our normal 1.5 CEUs; and in September we had 3.0 CEUs of Ethics! In addition, last summer we received a call from the Texas State Board of Examiners of Licensed Professional Counselors, inquiring if TNC would like to *host* a board meeting in Round Rock. After "picking up my jaw from off of the floor," I requested clarification: "surely I heard this incorrectly!" I was so amazed, grateful, humble, and then incredibly motivated to "roll out the red carpet," and help our state licensing board to feel welcome in our home-town. And this event went off splendidly, offering the highest quality Ethics CEUs that many of you

reported that you had ever attended! And we hope to have this opportunity in the future so that we can continue to offer the highest CEUs to our members.

3. In addition to our quality CEUs, we also have three clinical staffing groups now, who meet on a regular basis. We have two clinical staffing groups that meeting twice/month for 90 minutes; and we have a newly formed LPC-Supervisors' staffing group that meets once/month for 90 minutes.
4. Referrals continue to be a priority. And one of the most beautiful parts about this element is that as our therapists are growing in their own competence and specializing in particular issues, professionals are sharing with me that they are getting to serve more of the population in their chosen specialties, and referring out clients to other professionals who specialize in issues that they do not. This seems to be "win-win" scenario in which therapists' skill is growing, and clients are benefitting by working with specialists!
5. Apparently our members continue to invest in community education as well. We have volunteers working with the Agape Counseling Center, Divorce Recovery, Grief Support groups, and Campus Crusade for Christ.
6. Lastly, the TNC Board of Directors met monthly for communication and maintenance, as well as one additional meeting to update the Bylaws of our not-for-profit group. This last Bylaws update was prompted by a recent request of one individual to join our group, who was not licensed or en route to licensure in the mental health field; so we met to clarify the criteria for membership. In addition, our Board of Directors grew when Jennifer Madere, LPC, offered her organizational skills to help us in meeting our goals. And her enthusiasm has been a "breath of fresh air" for our Board. If you see her please thank her for serving our group.

Whew! That's a lot, is it not? Identifying our original goals and sharing with you the inventory of how we are doing on these items seems helpful, appropriate, and healthy. Yes, that's it: It's just what a healthy family does, communicating openly.

In light of this encouraging inventory of our original goals, what are your thoughts? What has been your experience with TNC, connecting with other professionals, enjoying the quality CEUs, etc.? I would love to hear. The Board would love to hear. Please share the next time we're together. And to think that we're able to enjoy these benefits, plus additional marketing on the TNC website (www.thenetconnection.org), all for only \$50/year. Particularly in today's economic difficulties, this is the best deal around!

And the next time that we are together, we will enjoy hearing from two local professionals, Dr. Donna Moncrief, and Dr. Joey Achacoso, both Registered Play Therapists, who will share with us more about bridging into the world of children. Bring a friend or co-worker and help us to continue growing our synergistic group!

I look forward to seeing you members at upcoming meetings, where we will hear from Margaret Bassett, LPC-S, about negotiating power dynamics in the room, from Brad Mason, LPC, about Autism & Asperger's, among others, and hopefully another round of Ethics directly from our state licensing board!

Again, I am so grateful to be a part of such a rich organization. Thank you for the opportunity!

Warmly & Respectfully,

Leah Wilson McDill, Ph.D., LPC-S

The Net Connection, President