



#TherapistsConnect : How One Tweet Emphasised A Deeper Desire For Connection Between Therapists – by Peter Blundell

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I have attempted to use Twitter (@drpeterblundell) on and off for many years. At first, I struggled to understand the point of Twitter, the constant likes and retweets. I felt discussions and news items often passed by in a blur and I questioned how meaningful it all was.

That was until I engaged with Twitter from a professional point of view, as a therapist and researcher. The sense of community I found amongst these networks was wonderful and the resources, discussions and debates I have often found to be stimulating and interesting. I found a wealth of information and an array of connections that I would not have known about beforehand.



Often, therapists can feel like they work in isolation. Client work is usually 1:1. We have access to our supervisors and maybe colleagues in the organisation we work for. But often we are working alone.

In this respect, my own Twitter networks have been very valuable for staying connected with the current debates going on within the profession. I have also been able to connect with other professionals across the UK (and the world) who I may not be able to see regularly face to face, but we can stay in contact frequently using social media.

Twitter can be a challenging terrain to navigate. There is always the risk of debates turning into arguments. It is difficult to always recognise the tone and intent with which a tweet was sent. In my opinion, this is no easier for us as therapists to steer our way through than it is for other Twitter users.



I admit that many of the debates I have been involved with I have found challenging. I am a person-centred and experiential therapist and feel passionate about this approach. I have often felt the need to jump to its defence when I feel it has been misrepresented or unfairly critiqued on social media. However, these discussions have often helped me to focus my arguments, understand other points of view and helped me to choose my words very carefully!

The people I have met along the way have (mostly) been friendly and supportive (even when we disagree). However, I also appreciate that not all therapists have felt that way. Therapists, like every other social media user, are vulnerable to trolls and targeted attacks when the views they express are not supported by others.

Recently, there have been therapists who have felt under attack from other therapists or even pathologized by them for expressing their views and campaigning for change within the profession. Conversely, many therapists have also raised ethical issues with other professionals on social media when they have attempted to categorise the behaviour of celebrities or other public figures as abnormal, without ever meeting them in person or seeking their consent.

These are the types of challenges that we face as therapists on Twitter and other social media platforms. However, despite this, I believe that most therapists who join Twitter are there to seek connection with other like-minded people. This does not mean that we will all think exactly the same but that we hold a similar set of underlying values and beliefs.

Thinking about the therapist community on Twitter I wondered – is there a way that I could connect more with other therapists? In this vein, I sent a tweet out on 6th January 2020 asking other therapists to tell me who they are, where they are and what they do. I included the hashtag #TherapistsConnect. I promised to retweet them all. I was hoping to chat with anyone who responded (I expected this to be a handful of people – how wrong I would be!). Three days later and I had hundreds of people respond to this one tweet with thousands of people using the hashtag #TherapistsConnect.

I did (just about) manage to retweet all the replies to my original tweet (which has been seen by over 50,000 people according to Twitter). However, the hashtag took on a life of its own and began to evolve. People began to move away from the original idea of the tweet, which was a way for each of us to connect through following each other.

Instead, the hashtag became an all-purpose hashtag for therapists to highlight interesting training, resources or discussions and debates around therapy. Therapists have connected around the globe. I have heard about all different types of therapeutic work and where it takes place. I even heard of a therapist who works from a narrowboat (@KConlinetherapy) albeit they work online!

Many of these discussions raised important questions about the current narratives that exist within the therapist community. Susan Cousins (@SusanCousins6) called for us to have more “inclusive narratives that support the diversity of practitioners” if we are to best serve the diverse client population.

Following this idea, some people attempted expansion of the hashtag to focus our connections further. For example, @Vnelsontherapy opened the hashtag #DeafTherapistsConnect hoping for a way of connecting with other deaf therapists across social media. Whereas, others have highlighted the need for us to connect beyond our own profession. @MentalHealthMil reminded us to connect and listen to those who use our therapy services and not just connect with each other.

Similarly, @ian_argent wondered if our bigger aim should be to make stronger connections with other professionals. I am hopeful that we can do all of these things.

There was one theme that I noticed across all of these tweets, which is an overwhelming theme of positivity, with a desire to build stronger relationships across the therapist and counsellor communities. This was about therapists connecting across all modalities, a shared sense of community and belonging.

It has only been a few weeks since I sent that first tweet. However, there have already been therapists who have connected with each other in person through the hashtag, as well as thousands of people who have connected virtually. I believe that the original tweet and hashtag have been so successful because there is a real desire for us to talk about and share the work that we do.

To increase our understanding of each other's work is also important as a profession and I believe it can help us develop a much stronger and connected therapists' community. Something that can help us work collaboratively rather than in isolation. In that respect, I need to say thank you to everyone who engaged with #TherapistsConnect without that support it would not have been possible.

I will continue to retweet any therapist who replies to my original tweet (and attempt to retweet all those who use the hashtag). I would encourage others to do the same because it is the collective response to this tweet and hashtag that made it a success, a joint effort by any stretch of the imagination!

I look forward to debating, discussing and connecting with more therapists (and others) throughout 2020.

Share and Enjoy !

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