

Title of Session: School Counselors' Forum

Moderator: Barbara Muller-Ackerman

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Room: On Tap Café

BarbaraMu: I have wanted to learn about neurofeedback and difference it can make in the lives of those kids who have trouble regulating themselves...it was great

BJ: would you want to lead a discussion on that during one of your school counselors discussions?

BarbaraMu: yes- definitely a terrific topic to talk about. I will try to get Garbarino for Sept or Rachel Simmons who has done things for me before.

BarbaraMu: but let's set the Sept date and work toward a really big splash with one of the two of them to kick it off

BarbaraMu: I will do more advertising of it for the new school year

BJ: it's worse than it was last year...must have been a tough year for a lot of people

BJ: ok...I'll cancel your session for June?

BarbaraMu: sounds good- I think I am in Italy then anyway

BJ: oh, you POOR thing!

BarbaraMu: So, it is just us again...want to be very short and sweet and then call it a night? I don't think a discussion of our children and grandchildren will work- tho my husband said I could talk about him

BJ laughs.

BJ: we could share hubby stories.

BarbaraMu: okay

BarbaraMu: Then- I have an incredible husband- we are married 29 years on June 29

BJ: nah...if we get a participant fine...if not, we don't need an archived transcript

BarbaraMu: I looked up a few web sites for emotional intelligence so, if she comes, that is where I would like to go

BJ: I was in the middle of congratulating you on 29 years...that's incredible!

SusanMcg joined the room.

BJ: Hi, Susan!

BJ: glad you made it back

SusanMcg: hi, thanks

BarbaraMu: So, introductions?

BJ nods

BarbaraMu: Hi Susan!

SusanMcg: hi, I am a special educator

BarbaraMu: I am an elementary school counselor in NJ

BJ: I'm an art teacher

SusanMcg: I'm on the secondary level - rr

BJ: where are you located, Susan?

SusanMcg: New York

BJ: I'm in Pennsylvania

BarbaraMu: I was going to talk about emotional intelligence with the school counselors...unless you want to go in a different direction Susan.

BJ: ahh..we're all east coast

SusanMcg: what does guidance on the elementary level entail

BarbaraMu: What is the age range of your students?

BJ: EQ sounds good to me. I just had two students have hissy fits because they couldn't stay on task for more than 5 minutes

SusanMcg: my students range from 9th to 12th grade

SusanMcg: emotional intelligence sounds interesting

BarbaraMu: A school counselor at the elementary level does a lot of primary prevention by being in the classroom teaching lessons - from social skills, to conflict resolution, career awareness, academic development skills....

BarbaraMu: I also do small group and individual counseling but the emphasis is trying to change the 90% of time spent with 10% of students, to meeting the needs of ALL students by working with more of the population.

BarbaraMu: I do a lot of work with parents- workshops - consultation, as well as with the staff. HS counselors are much more paper driven and elementary counselors have the joy of doing a lot more counseling

BJ thinks HS counselors should step away from the paperwork

SusanMcg: you certainly have for more time to work one on one than my peers - their focus is on classes, graduation credits, regents and college

BarbaraMu: Me too...but individual student planning and getting kids into post-secondary options is very time consuming and paper generating for them.

BJ: that leaves the kids who really need the counseling to fall through the cracks

SusanMcg: I agree we only have two psychologists, one for the ninth grade and one for 10, 11, and 12th

BarbaraMu: I think that's why counselors are spending less time in turf wars with SAC's (student assistance counselors) who used to be thought of for substance abuse intervention and now are very much one of the team to help with heavy counseling cases

SusanMcg: great, I have never heard of sac before

BJ: do you think Columbine had an influence on that thinking?

BarbaraMu: School counselors also, weren't meant to have long term cases. They are supposed to see a student 3-5 times and then refer out to the community mental health person.

BJ . o O (although it apparently had little influence on focusing on bullying)

BarbaraMu: Again, there are just too many kids to get tied up in year long counseling with them

SusanMcg: do you have a strong follow through rate when you refer them

BarbaraMu: I think we talked about bullying one month....In New Jersey the laws have changed so that bullying is, basically, illegal and students - especially in the HS- are now subject to charges

BJ nods.

BarbaraMu: I find that many counselors are torn because we know that if we refer out and don't hold on to the child for counseling, that there may be none....either it is an economic hardship for a parent, or they are too busy, or some other reason that keeps the process from going forward.

SusanMcg: so many fall through the cracks anyway

BarbaraMu: It becomes a real tear for the professional...there is only so much time and so much self to go around...and much more need than we can handle.

SusanMcg: I agree

SusanMcg: a sad fact that we all must work with

BJ: unfortunately, it also becomes a burden for the sped and classroom teacher who has to have these kids in their class

BJ: what is the solution, Barbara?

BJ waits for Barbara to get out her magic wand

BarbaraMu: It's interesting. In a nearby district, they are doubling their resource rooms (adding more rooms, not adding more kids to too few rooms) basically admitting that inclusion isn't working for the students, parents, or system.

SusanMcg: wow, my school is going in the opposite direction, they keep taking more of our skills kids into the mainstream

SusanMcg: and all our rr kids are mainstreamed

BarbaraMu: They are also looking for alternate remedies in the school systems. There is a large push by the supervisors and principals association to bring neurofeedback into the schools.

SusanMcg: can you give more information on this

BarbaraMu: As a potential remedy for students whose parents will not medicate them, this modality has enormous potential in retraining the brain to perform at a more optimal level.

BarbaraMu: Susan, did you see the comment about neurofeedback as an alternate to meds?

SusanMcg: my computer just acted up and I missed it

BJ: Barbara, press the up arrow on your keyboard

BarbaraMu: As a potential remedy for students whose parents will not medicate them, this modality has enormous potential in retraining the brain to perform at a more optimal level.

SusanMcg: years ago I had a student do biofeedback, is that similar or the same thing - if I remember correctly it dealt with patterns

BarbaraMu: Neurofeedback looks at many of the diagnoses in the DSM and takes a slightly different approach. It attributes a lot of the conditions students have (depression, anxiety, aspergers, ADHD) as a function of the arousal state of the brain.

SusanMcg: is its goal to retrain the brain

BarbaraMu: That the brain is either under or over aroused (or has an instability) and that the inefficient brainwave patterns keep these problems in place.

BarbaraMu: yes

BarbaraMu: It is a cognitive physical therapy for the brain

SusanMcg: interesting - any statistical analysis

BarbaraMu: The student looks at a computer screen with no joystick or keypad and must make the game work by being in the right brainwave frequency

BarbaraMu: Some for epilepsy...more for ADHD...

SusanMcg: this is exactly what my former student did for add and we did have some success

BarbaraMu: The studies can be found on a number of websites.

SusanMcg: at first many of us were skeptical but we did see a difference

BarbaraMu: ADD needs 20-40 sessions to practice the brain enough to make it stick...sometimes, parents bow out early because they see changes and stop too soon. The brain needs the practice to have long lasting effects

SusanMcg: this was a dedicated parent and they did stick to it for months

BarbaraMu: Otherwise, the brain falls back into its old defaults

BarbaraMu: It has shown terrific success with ADHD.

SusanMcg: how long do positive results last and does the student need to keep up with it to have long-term success

BarbaraMu: I am going to start to work with a number of Aspergers students in June.

SusanMcg: i would be interested in hearing about your progress - this population interests me

BarbaraMu: They say that the results last unless or until there is some trauma...that trauma can catapult the brain back to the old default. But, then, one or two sessions (like a booster shot) should bring you right back to the point of success.

BarbaraMu: There are more and more PDD and Aspergers students coming up through the system now.

SusanMcg: sounds great - I wonder why more schools near me do not subscribe to it

BarbaraMu: Economics?

BarbaraMu: Personnel?

SusanMcg: yes, we have one Aspergers student in the hs right now, but on the primary level we have one full class of 12 autistic students

SusanMcg: could be either

BarbaraMu: This was the main topic of the New Jersey School Counselor Assoc. spring conference. So, it is starting. You can find local practitioners through the web sites and invite them to come talk at the school or to a parent group in order to initiate interest.

BarbaraMu: Here is one of the major websites for information-

BarbaraMu: <http://eegspectrum.com>

SusanMcg: great idea, thanks we will look into it since we are beginning to plan for what to do with this class as it moves up

BarbaraMu left the room (signed off).

BJ: oops

BJ . o O (we're taking turns losing connections)

SusanMcg: oh well isn't technology great

BJ nods...when it works well

SusanMcg: I guess I will sign off myself, it was great talking with you - thanks for all your help

BJ: thanks for joining the discussion, Susan.

SusanMcg: thanks goodnight

BJ waves goodnight

SusanMcg left the room (signed off).

BarbaraMu joined the room.

BarbaraMu: took the long way back?!

BJ: wb, Barbara

BarbaraMu: Sorry

BarbaraMu: I couldn't get back on-machine froze

BJ: she asked that I thank you for the discussion

BarbaraMu: well- I think it gave her something to think about?

BJ: I think she found the information very useful

BarbaraMu: good-then it was worth it. we never did get to the emotional intelligence stuff

BJ smiles..oh, well.

BarbaraMu: do we even want to go there or should I give you a couple of neurofeedback sites to put with the discussion

BJ: have a wonderful trip to Italy...that sounds so exciting!

BJ: let's save them for the September session

BJ: and tell your hubby we talked about him and only said very nice things

BarbaraMu: anyway, happy belated birthday, I will tell mike...keep taking care of yourself and lets nail it down for September...the later time works for me...

BJ: good. See you in September!

BJ hugs goodnight

BarbaraMu: gnight!