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DECEMBER 2022 Newsletter

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Greetings Colleagues and Friends,
I started writing this Newsletter in early November and before I knew it, December had arrived. The warm weather on the East Coast, coupled with fall activities and a quick trip to Boston all contributed to this delay. But I think I've made up for it. This issue is jam-packed with information to help you in get ready for 2023. Don't forget to check out previous Newsletters and stay tuned as new information is released throughout the year. Wishing you and the ones you love a holiday season that brings joy, health and peace.
Best-
Leslie

Ethics CE Opportunity December 4, 2022

It's not too late to register for "Avoiding the Slippery Slope in Private Practice: Managing Complex Ethical Issues"

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As the former Chair of the NASW-NJ Ethics Committee and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with expertise and a passion for professional ethics I am uniquely poised and excited to once again be offering this interesting and vital workshop.

Based on NASW's top substantiated ethics-related complaints, this live, interactive, virtual webinar on Zoom explores common ethical mistakes that land clinicians in hot water such as:

- √ **Insufficient informed consent**
- √ **Engaging in dual relationships/boundary crossings**
- √ **Misunderstanding privacy, confidentiality, & release of records**
- √ **Inadequate termination practices**

Course Objectives:
Identify, approach, manage and avoid complicated ethical issues

- Recognize the most frequent ethical issues encountered by private practitioners
- Develop a framework to approach ethical decision-making
- Apply Reamer's 6 key steps to reduce ethical malpractice risk

For more information: https://www.leslietsukroff.com/avoiding-the-slippery-slope
To register: https://www.leslietsukroff.com/events

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Details:
Sunday, December 4, 2022
9:00 AM- 2:30 PM, EST
Zoom
$125.00
5 Ethics CEs for Social workers in all states except NY and WV

Ethics Matters- Preparing for 2023

It's almost New Year's Resolution time. While this tradition is typically reserved for personal matters such as a recommitment to self-care (on my list every year), weight loss (on my list every year), increased exercise (on my list every year), healthier eating (on my list every year), or being more present (on my list every year), **January is also the perfect time for implementing new business goals, processes, procedures and policies for our private practices.**

Begin thinking about your business intentions for the upcoming year NOW!
As we approach the end of 2022, it is important to set aside time to assess **what is and isn't working, what needs to shift, what tasks we can let go of, and what deserves more of our attention. By doing this, we will be better poised to remove, modify and implement new business goals** come January 1st.

I know I sound like a broken record, but it has been hard to focus on the business of running a private practice over the past few years. Many

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clinicians are just now saying that the fog is starting to lift, their energy is increasing, they have regained the capacity to think like an entrepreneur, and they are ready to examine their practices and prepare for the year ahead. Let's make a commitment to ourselves and to each other **to work smarter not harder.**

One way to do this is to dedicate time and energy to evaluating the business of running a private practice. By not skipping this valuable step, we can avoid engaging in behaviors that can leave us vulnerable to malpractice risk, professional burn out, and financial instability.

Some things to think consider:
Would you like to increase referrals? Identify your ideal client, establish a niche and pinpoint specialty areas. Develop a marketing plan that outlines what steps you'll take to spread the word and a reasonable timeframe for doing so.
Is your current schedule working for you and your family? When are you most productive? Least productive? Are you setting aside time for self-care? Breaks and meals? Skills enhancement? Professional and personal connection? Hobbies? If not, think about how you can change this. Not all clinicians work the same schedule. Would offering only daytime, weekend or evening hours fit your lifestyle and allow you more time for other endeavors?
Are you struggling keeping up with documentation? Figure out what is getting in the way. Join or start a peer workgroup where the sole purpose is to provide mutual support and accountability in managing paperwork.

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Assess your current client caseload. Are you feeling competent? Stuck? Are you experiencing frequent cancellations or "no shows"? Each week, are you feeling a pit in your stomach before THAT client? (You know the one). Is it time to "have the talk", set limits, terminate or transfer certain clients? Don't delay. The longer a less than ideal situation exists, the worse it tends to get. Trust me. I've been there.

Schedule time off. Go get a 2023 calendar and plan time away from the practice right now! More than just a day or two here and there. You don't necessarily have to go somewhere each time, but make sure you give yourself several consecutive days throughout the year to relax, recharge and feed your soul. You'll be glad you did.

Want Assistance in Implementing Any of the Above Suggestions?

Did you know Leslie S. Tsukroff, MSW, LCSW provides individual consultations?

- Wrestling with an **ethical dilemma**?
- Questions regarding your **private practice**?
- Thinking of **launching, modifying or expanding** your private practice?
- **Feeling overwhelmed, burned-out** and want to make changes, but don't know where to begin?
- Need help as you **create/revise your practice policies and procedures**?
- Want to ensure your documentation **meets state licensing and audit requirements**?

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- Winding down towards **retirement**?
- Looking for clinical guidance from a **Licensed Clinical Social Worker with close to 30 years of experience**?

Contact me to discuss your needs. I'm here to support you every step of the way!

Looking for a Professionally-Led Consultation Group?

I may have one right for you.
For those who have recently started on their private practice journeys, I am in the process of organizing two separate consultation groups to meet the needs of the private practice community. While both groups will focus on practitioners who have started in private practice within the past five years and are looking for support and guidance in **clinical interventions, documentation and record-keeping, growing and managing a private practice, ethical and legal considerations**, they differ in clinician population.
One group is appropriate for clinicians who have recently obtained independent licensure and are new to private practice and the other group is geared towards mental health professionals who have been in the field for some time, but are new to the world of private practice.
Want to know more? Let's chat **LTsukroffLCSW@Hushmail.com or 973-879-1678**

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Additional Helpful Hints to Start Out the New Year on the Right Foot

I strongly recommend that you obtain written informed consent from all existing clients at least 1 time per year and the New Year is the perfect time to do this.

- Consents/policies for treatment including but not limited to: financial; social media; communication/use of technology; remote therapy; updated in-office therapy safety requirements and protocols; confidentiality
- Provide an updated GFE to all eligible clients
- HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices
- Communication preferences
- ROIs
- Credit card authorization form

Update all practice policies, consents and forms
Now is the time to review ALL existing practice policies and update any forms that might be out of date. Chances are you have either modified your business practices recently or have been thinking about doing this. Do all of your policies match up? Oftentimes, when I am reviewing consultee's practice policies, I find discrepancies between documents. Having contradictory statements in your policies may lead to those policies being deemed "null and void".

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Be sure to take the time to really examine critical items including, but not limited to:

- Cancellation/no show, sick, vacation, office hours, and emergency policies. Don't forget to add 988 to your guidance on emergency procedures.
- Circumstances that would lead to suspension or termination of services
- Reimbursement-related concerns such as fees, payment requirements/procedures, credit cards, status with insurance companies, services typically not reimbursable by insurance companies and clawbacks
- Information, processes and confidentiality related to utilization review audits, including pre-payment and post payment requests
- Telehealth services such as potential limitations due to insurance, client location, licensing requirements and state and federal laws
- Use of technology, remote services, social media and communication polices
- Expectations for in-person services, including disclosures, health and safety processes and obligations of all parties

Raising fees? If you are planning to raise your fees in 2023, now is the time to determine your increase, advise your clients (in writing and in person) of the upcoming rate increase and start working on your updated fee agreement. The standard of care suggests that we provide clients with ample notice (at least 30 days) of fee increases or changes in reimbursement procedures.

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Update clients' information.

On or before the New Year:

- Obtain a copy of your clients' new insurance card. Do not take your client's word for it. Too many times this has backfired on colleagues. More and more, we are seeing carve outs for behavioral health and differences between companies that issue the policy and those that administer, manage and pay out claims. This may lead to confusion between in-network and out-of-network status, overpayments, underpayments, and denials.
- Update medical, medication and adjunctive treatment provider/prescriber information
- To substantiate medical necessity, track symptoms and progress and to help guide treatment planning, the new year is a great time to ask clients to complete and/or retake prior assessments.
- Review, assess and revise existing treatment plans and re-evaluate diagnosis (es)
- Verify clients' addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses and emergency contacts
- For those who work with minors, confirm current age and when clients will reach the age of majority, as new consents for treatment and/or ROIs may be required

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