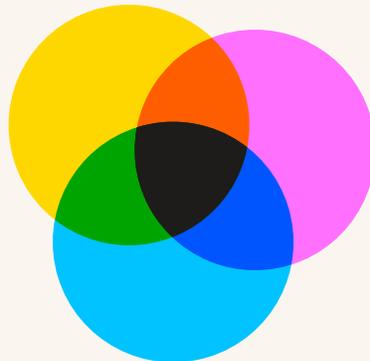


Chatter



Book Club Kit

*For the Mental Healthcare
Professional*



Ethan Kross

For the Mental Healthcare Professional

1. Many forms of talk therapy require people to reflect on their thoughts and feelings. Yet, as Kross observes, introspection often does “significantly more harm than good” to people experiencing distress. How can you help clients reflect on their inner states without eliciting chatter?
2. Kross argues that “the inner voice is valuable not in spite of the pain it causes us, but because of it.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Kross asks, “do the countless ‘voices’ of others we encounter on social media affect the voices in our minds?” Discuss this question in the context of what you see with your clients. If you have been practicing since before the widespread adoption of social media, have you seen a difference in your clients before and after? Do you think social media is overall benefitting or negatively impacting society? Do you think it is possible for your clients to strategically use social media to improve rather than harm their well-being? If so, how?
4. Do you ever find yourself suffering from chatter when trying to help a client in a professional setting? What tactics have you used to help mitigate your chatter? Are they similar to those that Kross suggests?
5. Kross reviews research on “Solomon’s Paradox,” the idea that it is easier to counsel others than it is to counsel ourselves. Do you find this to be true in your own experiences? If so, how do you make sense of the fact that you can offer advice to others that is so useful but often stumble in following that advice in your own life?
6. Kross argues that when we are helping others in distress, we need to provide them “the comfort of Kirk and the intellect of Spock”—or, in other words, we need to offer the right balance of social and cognitive support to help them deal with their problems constructively and avoid the slippery slope of rumination. How do you strike that balance with your patients? Do you find that some patients require different amounts of Kirk versus Spock?
7. According to a study cited in chapter one, typically what people are thinking about at a given time is “a better predictor of their happiness than what they [are] actually doing.” Do you see evidence of this in your practice?
8. Kross writes that our default state is to “decouple” from the present, “our brains transporting us to past events, imagined scenarios, and other internal musings.” Do you ever find it difficult to harness your chatter to remain present in your work? Do your clients have difficulty staying present during sessions? If so, what tactics do you use to help you and them remain focused on the task at hand?
9. At the end of *Chatter*, Kross explains that the human brain has evolved to provide us with a voice in our heads that can help us celebrate the good while making the best out of the bad in our lives. How might you help your clients differentiate between this voice and the din of the chatter in their heads?
10. According to Kross, people “wouldn’t want to live a life without an inner voice that upsets you some of the time. It would be like braving the sea in a boat with no rudder.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Do you think your opinion would be different if you weren’t in the mental healthcare profession?