



Mind Matters

COACHING, COUNSELING & PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATES

Monthly Newsletter

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Clinician Spotlight:

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Therapy is essential when your therapist is as invested in you as you are in your own healing process. Many positive feelings and outcomes can occur when you feel prepared to handle the challenges that await you within the therapeutic process. Preparation includes predictability and practicality – two necessary concepts in my approach to solution-focused therapy. When we feel out of control of what others think or feel, or are in situations we feel defenseless in, we need to remember what we can control. We can solve our own problems and achieve our goals with the right mindset and plan of action.

For 16 years, I have mainly helped high school students transition into their college journeys through assessment and reflection in self-advocacy. This has helped my students successfully convey their thoughts and goals through college admissions essays, personal statements, appeal letters, and cover letters. Likewise, I have assisted in creating and editing admissions resumes, professional resumes, and military biographies. The journey to college can involve heightened emotions, questioning oneself, unpredictable occurrences – all interfering with the process to achieve goals. Therefore, I have helped students and families through tough divorce and custody situations, sudden loss, and expectations falling short. My counseling experience has evolved within that time to aid children, adults, couples, and families through a variety of issues and goal setting.

My overall mission is to help my clients discover the tools and skills they innately have to handle such challenges through therapy. When self-actualization for my clients is achieved, then therapy has been proven to be a worthy investment and they are better able to achieve their goals.



College Preparation: Admission Essays

'Wow! There's so many!' I thought as my eyes and smile widened. Entering the room, I was bombarded with sights, sounds, and smells that would make anyone feel sensory overload. But the level of excitement I had was a good counter. Not even a few steps in, I felt a pat on my thigh and turned to look for the source of the touch. His long, limber arm managed to make it out of his cage and got my attention. That's when it happened. "Those ears!! They're so big and floppy!" This blonde, pink nose, tail-wagging puppy smiling ear-to-ear chose me as I chose him. "Yes, you're gonna be my new puppy!"

Now that I have your attention, what do you think this paragraph is about? Hopefully you guessed it right. I am describing how I met my dog, Stewie, for the first time at the humane society. I adopted him that same day. You may notice his pictures in my office! For 13 years, he has made petting something soft so satisfying, stressful days a bit more bearable, and thinking even more outside of myself as his proud owner while we built happy memories together.

Let's consider the art of creating a solid admissions essay. For those of you that are thinking about college, you may have heard of something called the "Common Application." It is exactly what the name describes - one big application that the vast majority of colleges take as their form of application to their school. Here, you are required to draft your college admissions essay. They offer about 7 prompts to choose from, which can be overwhelming and a bit confusing when you start to brainstorm what you should actually write about. In fact, you may find that several of those prompts overlap with each other in asking for similar answers. They even offer a "topic of choice," which in my opinion can make this process even more overwhelming. So, which prompt do you choose?

I find it easier to first address what NOT to do. We have to remember who our audience is. Each admissions counselor makes up one in a team of roughly 10-15 others in an admissions committee. Each admissions cycle, depending on which school they represent, they are required to read anywhere from 1 - 10 essays for each applicant. And they are suffering because many applicants make the mistake of writing about the following:

- 1 - a challenge involving not making a team but working hard the following year to then make the team
- 2 - falling short of expectations in something academic and then studying harder to achieve the grade they originally set out to earn
- 3 - starting your essay with the introduction that says how you reviewed all the prompts and chose to talk about all the qualities of you in order to make yourself sound unique

These three ideas set you up for failure. The feelings you have from failures, overcoming challenges, or being proud of yourself are significant to you, but for the stranger on the other end reading your essay? They are already thinking "NEXT!" Please please please, don't take this personally!! They have been there and done that thousands of times, literally. They don't want to read another sports essay where you overcame a personal challenge, or that your aim for perfection fell short, or that you tried to be clever in your approach to being eclectic in your essay. Rightfully so, their reactions are understandable. They want so desperately to be entertained - to laugh, smile, get teary-eyed, feel something other than boredom, and perhaps, even learn or discover something totally new from your essay.

In my example at the start of this article, I described the scene in which I met Stewie (aww puppy) instead of just saying that I went to the humane society and adopted a dog (yawn). Additionally, I would share how adopting Stewie showcases my innate ability to help others in need. He is a certified Good Canine Citizen and through volunteering, he too has managed to help others in need.

Now, I offered what NOT to do for your essay so what should you do? Think like I did and pick something meaningful to you, but paint the entire picture with details and in-the-moment descriptions. This will help the reader's attention be captured quickly, and the reader will feel like they are part of your story from the start. This will motivate them to continue reading, which is what you want them to do.

Your story could be similar to others, but the way in which you experienced it is what is unique to you and it can be delivered in that unique way to your reader.

When brainstorming, look at your bedroom, your clothes, your schedule, your family - what is it that you do or that makes you unique? Is it the way in which you collect dreamcatchers of all varieties? Do you have an obsession with wearing pants with pockets? Do you eat your food in a certain order at dinner time? Are you responsible for making family dinner on Sundays? Do you start every conversation with a pun?

Maybe these questions don't directly apply to you, but this could help you brainstorm the right ideas and ultimately select the best one to draft your admissions essay.

Remember that this essay is to present a snapshot of who you are on any given day of your life. Therefore, stay in the moment and tell your story like you would with your friends and family. As they are interested to hear what you have to say, so will this set of strangers on the other end determining your acceptance into their college or university.

If you need any further assistance, you could use the QR code below to gain access to my instructional videos or call to schedule an appointment with me.

We can't wait to read your story!

