I believe online counseling can be a positive tool for counselors. Online counseling has many benefits, as well as risks. It is important for a counselor to have a wide array of essential skills and techniques in order to accommodate a multitude of individuals. Online counseling can help a client. Online counseling may also help counselors improve their own private practice. There may be clients who seek online counseling for certain factors. Some important factors to keep in mind is perceived need for anonymity, desire for specialized services, lack of transportation, time management, disability, and cost.

In terms of practical issues, it is important for a counselor to remember that there is a physical presence missing. Counselors can observe their clients through posture, facial expression, gestures, and tone of voice. All of these factors are potentially taken away when using online counseling. I feel like Skype can be a positive tool when using online counseling. Skype can give the counselor and client a physical presence as well as the ability to meet in real time. As for email, it can break down hierarchical barriers and cause a more relaxed atmosphere. I would not particularly use email because of potential misinterpretations that could occur. A client might interpret a message as being sarcastic or rude and this may damage the counselor-client relationship.

As for webpages, I found them to be extremely informative. I like the idea of viewing the counselor and the profile of the counselors. It gives educational information about the counselor and the type of therapies that may be available for the client. My web pages provided other types of information like approaches, methods, techniques, coping skills, and relaxation methods. Web pages seem to be a useful tool for clients to investigate their options.

Professionals also have to take into account ethic issues when counseling online. Informed consent is the most central ethical issue in the mental health profession. A counselor has to gain as much information as possible from their clients. It is important for all counselors to have an informed consent form so clients have the proper knowledge of the risks and benefits of online counseling. The counselor has to give as much knowledge about themself to help the client decide if that type of approach would benefit them. Some of ethical issues counselors and clients need to be aware of is experience, training, computer skills, and verifications of qualifications.

Counselors also have legal duties to their clients. It is important that the counselor-client relationship have a common law practice. Online counseling laws seem to vary from state to state. This may cause difficulties when counseling online. The counselors have to be aware of the other laws and restrictions in other states as well as their own. Counselors are still held responsible in other states for their restrictions and can commit malpractice if they are uneducated. If a counselor violates these duties there may be grounds for a civil lawsuit against the professional. This would cause great uncertainty. There is a huge fear of this unknown in the counseling field.

 As a counselor I can see myself using online counseling as a tool .However, I do not see myself using online counseling as a primary medium in my practice. I believe online counseling can help improve my client’s process and my one private practice. It also seems as a way to learn new skills, seek professional development, and help aid in networking opportunities. First, I would have to undergo proper training. I am not very technical when using the computer. As I gain insight and knowledge I hope to gain a better understanding of online counseling in order to help my clients. I think I would like to use Skype, blogs, and web pages for online counseling tools.

I had an online class using Skype and I really enjoyed the interaction with the class. I liked having a name with a face. It made my experience feel real and authentic. I feel like relationships develop when individuals can identify with a person by name and face. I also liked Skype because I feel like there is more of a connection between the counselor and clients. As a counselor they can still observe some type of body language, which are non-verbal cues. I believe non-verbal cues to be extremely important when it comes to therapy. As a trained counselor it would benefit the client’s progress. I would be upset as a counselor if I lost that in my counseling practice.

Blogs seem to be like a personal journal for clients. I utilized journals very frequently as a child. It allowed me to express certain issues I had that I had trouble verbalizing as a child. I believe my journals had a great influence on me as a child. I have never personally started my own blog online but I have read other counselor’s. I find them very interesting because each one had a specific topic and guideline.

Now blogs are in the public domain and individuals can give feedback to a blog. Blogging may help as a form of self-therapy, which can release feelings and help with relief. I can see this as very beneficial tool for clients who need assistance or some type of release. Blogs seem to be a little more work for counselors since they still have to view and be aware of each individual’s feelings within their blog but blogs seem to be an extremely helpful tool. As for webpages, I found them extremely informative. I would like my own web page. I think it would be helpful for clients. Clients can view my information, education, background, previous experience, and therapeutic approach. If I were client I would like to have information on my counselors so I would like to give that option to clients as well.