

# NEUROPSYCHOTHERAPY IN AUSTRALIA



THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY USE ON COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS:  
A NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Issue 30 January-February 2015



Dr Pieter Rossouw

## Editorial

### Four years!

We are celebrating the fourth year of our e-journal *Neuropsychotherapy in Australia* – Edition 30. Since the humble beginnings with 200 registered readers the Journal has grown to well over 4,000 subscribers world-wide. We are truly thankful for the ongoing support and interest in this exciting field of applied brain based therapies. I am constantly mindful of the “third law” of the master in the field – Nobel laureate Erik Kandel who said:

*Patient care is our most important responsibility. That is why we are here. Never let patient care take a secondary role. Patient welfare is the ultimate goal of biological science and it is the engine that drives the whole scientific enterprise.*

*Neuroscience opens amazing new opportunities to benefit you clients – utilise it, do it justice and enjoy the future!”*

(Kandel, E.R. 2006. *In Search of Memory. The Emergence of a new Science of Mind*. New York, W.W. Norton)

### Neuropsychotherapy - Impact

The impact of Neuropsychotherapy is growing – the ongoing invites to lecture in New Zealand, Africa, China, Europe and the USA as well as 32 Conference presentation over the past 4 years, demonstrate this fact. The interest in research in this area has led to this publication as well as our sister journals:

- The Neuropsychotherapist – [www.neuropsychotherapist.com](http://www.neuropsychotherapist.com)
- the open access scientific International Journal of Neuropsychotherapy – <http://www.neuropsychotherapist.com/journal/>
- as well as the Institute for Neuropsychotherapy – <http://neuropsychotherapist.com/institute> .

This provides ongoing professional development in Neuroscience and Applied Brain Based therapies (currently 15 modules available for guided self-study).

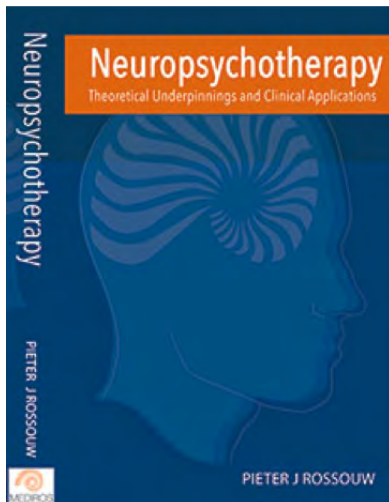
***In this edition*** we share a popularised outcome of a neuroscientific research project that was conducted at the University of Queensland. The outcomes of the study was presented at the International Conference of Applied Psychology (Paris, France) and published in the *International Journal of Neuropsychotherapy*. The broader dissemination was published in the New York Times in December 2014.

## New Workshop – the Adolescent Brain

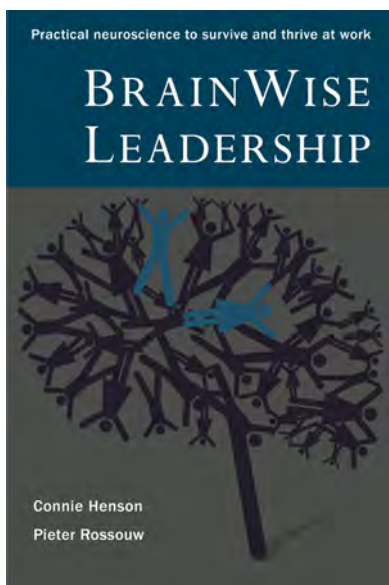
Our core business – research in the field of applied brain based therapies as well as training in this field, continues. A brand new two day workshop: The Adolescent Brain – Utilizing Neurobiological Information to enhance Mental Health and Learning has been developed to benefit clinicians and educators working with adolescents (for more information visit our website [www.mediros.com.au](http://www.mediros.com.au))

## Books on applied neuroscience

### The recent books:



- Pieter Rossouw (Ed.) (2014) *Neuropsychotherapy – Theoretical Underpinnings and Clinical Applications*.



- Connie Henson and Pieter Rossouw (2013) *BrainWise Leadership – Practical Neuroscience to Survive and Thrive at Work*.

These books are available in bookstores; through Amazon – [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) (just type “Rossouw” in the search) or through our Mediros office – order forms are available in this edition.

Enjoy the read!  
Pieter Rossouw

# THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY USE ON COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS: A NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Pieter Rossouw & Christina Leggett  
The University of Queensland



## Summary

**W**E ARE IN THE MIDST OF AN INTERNET REVOLUTION and entering an era of enhanced digital connectivity (Hoffman, Novak, & Venkatesh, 2004). The increasing use and accessibility of technology today allows humans to engage and disconnect continuously during face-to-face interactions. Technology is not only used in workspaces but in everyday social relationships as well. The impact of technology use on couple relationships from a neuropsychological perspective has not yet been explored, however.

This study investigated the use of television (TV), mobile phones, computers, and laptops in a sample of 21 couples to assess how this impacts on an individual's sense of safety, control, and attachment. It was found that using a laptop while in the presence of a partner, but without engaging/interacting with

them, was associated with a couple's negative perception of the relationship, but this effect was not found in relation to mobile, computer, or TV use. Conversely, it was found that couples using technology together while engaging/interacting was linked to positive perceptions about their relationship. This was found most specifically in TV use. It was concluded that technology may enhance or hinder couple relationships depending on the couple's ability to manage, monitor, and reflect on its use.

This study was published in the *International Journal for Neuropsychotherapy*: [www.neuropsychotherapist.com/the-impact-of-technology-use-on-couple-relationships/](http://www.neuropsychotherapist.com/the-impact-of-technology-use-on-couple-relationships/)

A popularized discussion was published in Dec 2014 in the New York Times – The following is a copy of the article published in the New York Times:

## Are Gadget-Free Bedrooms the Secret to a Happy Relationship?

Nick Bilton - December 03, 2014 – A version of this article appeared in print on December 4, 2014, on page E2 of the New York edition with the headline: Tweeting Together, Staying Together.

Link: *New York Times* <http://nyti.ms/1tFCu7J>

Sound the Alarm: The good old-fashioned relationship is under attack from technology.

That seems to be the message from a growing body of psychology research examining how technology is affecting our love lives and friendships.

For many couples, technology is a double-edged sword. The 'his' and 'hers' towels have been replaced by smartphones that allow people to stay tethered all day, whether it's to share shopping lists or heart-shaped emoji. But those couples get into tiffs when one person pulls out a cell phone at dinner or clicks on the iPad before bed, forgoing pillow talk for Twitter.

A study published last month in *The International Journal of Neuropsychotherapy*, for example, found that when one person in a relationship is using some forms of technology more than the other, it makes the second person feel ignored and insecure. Or as your therapist may say, it brings up a whole lot of abandonment issues.

"engaging in technology separate to a partner while in the presence of them encourages a disconnection rather than a connection," said Christina Leggett, a senior researcher at the School of Psychology at the University of Queensland in Australia, who wrote the study with Pieter J. Rossouw, a professor there. "Disconnection in relationships tends to lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and compromises an individual's sense of safety, attachment and control."

In a study published this year, Pew Research found that 25 percent of cell phone users in a relationship believed that their partner was distracted by that person's cell phone when they were together. Eight percent said they had argued about how much time one party spends online.

In 2013, a study by Brigham Young University researchers concluded that texting too much within a relationship could leave partners very dissatisfied with their overall communication. (Saying "sorry" over text in an argument only made things worse,

the same study found.) An in 2012, researchers at the Baylor University Hankamer School of Business found that paying too much attention to a cell phone could ruin relationship with loved ones and friends.

"Phubbing your significant other by giving precedence to your phone activities over paying attention to your significant other is a path to strained relationships," James Roberts, a professor at Baylor who wrote the 2012 study, wrote in an email, using the shorthand term for "phone snubbing."

"When one or both people in a couple overuse (variously defined) their cell phone, or other technology, it is likely to undermine their relationship."

One way to find a balance, according to researchers I spoke with, is to organize device-free outings with your significant other. That could include weekend hikes in areas without cell service or leaving phones at home during brunch. (Sorry: That means you won't be able to Instagram your eggs Benedict.)

At home, where it's more difficult to escape the clutches of tech, researchers suggested setting up gadget-free zones, where laptops, iPads and other devices are banned. Dr. Rossouw said that he tell people to make the bedroom a "sacred space free from technology." He also noted that couples who work from home should be especially cognizant of this, creating strict boundaries for where tech is allowed and where it's not.

But take it from me, setting up gadget-free zones isn't easy. My fiancée and I are currently in a standoff about our gadget-free bedroom. From her perspective, there should not be any gadgets in the bedroom except an alarm clock. While I think this is fair, I've argued that if I was reading a book on my iPad, then that device should be exempt from the ban. And a Kindle, which could be seen as a print book with a fancy reading light, should be perfectly O.K., too. (She disagrees, hence the standoff.)

One solution, if things get really extreme, could be installing wallpaper in the bedroom that can block Wi-Fi signals from coming in or out. Though if you get to that point, you may have bigger problems.

If you think a Kindle is tricky, wait until your significant other starts wearing the Apple Watch next year. Are you going to ask your husband or wife to take off the watch before coming into the gadget-



free bedroom?

But tech in a relationship isn't all bad. In fact, if used correctly, it can actually bring couples closer together. Ms. Leggett and Dr. Rossouw's study found that couples who used technology together – watching TV, for example – can make people feel more connected in their relationship.

(Quick, grab the popcorn and a good rom-com.) The researchers even found that couples using their cell phone together "while engaging and interacting with each other" could be positive. (Words With Friends, darling?)

Some experts who study the effects of tech on relationships say that the cons of tech don't outweigh the pros.

"Being able to stay in touch with loved ones when they are not physically present is a benefit that ought

not be underestimated," said Michael J. Rosenfeld, an associate professor of sociology at Stanford University, who wrote a breakthrough paper in 2012 about technology and relationships. "I don't disagree that technology can distract us away from the people who are most physically proximate, but I see no evidence that our relationships are diminished by technology."

Whether you're all for unlimited gadget use in a relationship, or against it, you can probably agree that finding a balance in this tech-replete world is increasingly difficult.

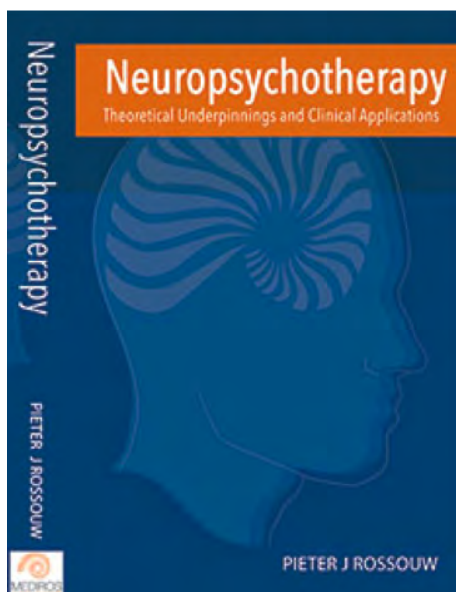
Yet whatever couples decide to do, one thing is clear: The boundaries people collectively decide upon in a relationship now will set the bar for what's acceptable in a good old-fashioned relationship of the future. That is, until it comes under attack from the next wave of distracting tech products.



*Mediros Clinical Solutions is proud to announce the release of Dr. Pieter Rossouw's new book:*

## **Neuropsychotherapy: Theoretical Underpinnings and Clinical Applications**

**October 27, 2014**



In this book Pieter Rossouw and his colleagues have made a wonderful and exciting contribution to the world of psychology, psychotherapy and counselling by bringing into practical reality the importance of an integrative approach to the psychosocial care of others. The book presents a ground-breaking, new integrated model of neuropsychotherapy, based on years of research, clinical practice and teaching in the neuropsychotherapy field.

Dr Rossouw's integrated model of neuropsychotherapy develops and enhances the theoretical work of Seymour Epstein and Klaus Grawe and recognises that safety in the therapeutic alliance is a core component and guiding tenet of a neuropsychotherapeutic approach. Through the principles of neuroscience the book takes us on a challenging, yet exciting journey exploring the application of brain-based therapies.

Section A of the book (chapters 1, 2 and 3) reviews the development through history of how neuroscience has informed schools of psychology and therapeutic approaches, and critiques existing theoretical constructs. Section B (the remaining 17 chapters) offers a series of case studies, written by practising clinicians from across Australia, in varying clinical settings and the application of a neuropsychotherapeutic approach and principles for a wide range of psychopathologies.

This book is the culmination of a significant interest in and passion for engaging with people suffering from a range of mental challenges. It is also the result of a passion for understanding the human brain and how our genetic footprint is expressed through engaging with the environment. It is this interaction that leads to genetic expression and (in safe, enriched environments) leads to healthy neural development and the capacity not only to survive the challenges of life but also to thrive. When survival is compromised, changes in the brain occur. These changes express on a neurochemical and neuro-structural level and alter neural networks and can lead to the onset of psychopathology. This book challenges our science, our art and perhaps most importantly of all, our humanity. For years in the real world clinicians have known the value of an holistic, integrative approach but often only whispered words like 'eclectic' and 'holistic' and 'integrative' in describing their practice for fear of being ridiculed for lacking a purist psychological doctrine.

This book offers real validation to the care that people had known to always work and Dr Rossouw and his colleagues deserve the thanks of many, many practitioners for giving strength and confidence and structure to their practice. The view of human distress as a disease to be treated by 'experts' is placed aside in recognising the power of human beings and their minds to heal and grow and change within a place of safety, to be found in the sanctuary of the therapeutic setting. Dr Rossouw and his colleagues have helped to return the people who deserve our care to the centre of healing where they belong. They have placed them there along with the wonder of relationship and connection. Dr Rossouw is constantly mindful of so many people that suffer on a daily basis with various presentations of mental distress.

This book is ultimately for every one of them. Dr Rossouw's hope is that this volume will open some new insights and pathways for clinicians to engage with their clients in such a way that the theoretical underpinnings and clinical applications of neuropsychotherapy will open new perspectives and facilitate new neural pathways to thrive and enhance quality of life.

## ***Praise for Neuropsychotherapy: Theoretical Underpinnings and Clinical Applications***

*As a specialist working with clients who are traumatized by bullying, I have been struggling to find a scientific biopsychosocial model of theory and treatment. The literature to date has offered a scattergun approach, great ideas, but lacking synthesis and treatment applications.*

*Finally we have a guide to understanding and treating our clients using the brain as the core focus! This book is based upon basic logic and scientific evidence. It replaces the temporary, committee-based, subjective theories that have guided the diagnosis and treatment of psychological injury and disorders for too long. I welcome Neuropsychotherapy and look forward to a new era of treatment based upon basic 'brain food'.*

**Evelyn M Field, OAM, FAPS, Melbourne, Australia**

*"This is an inspirational, ground-breaking book, forging new frontiers toward creating a unique paradigm for psychological and emotional healing! Neuropsychotherapy presents us with overview of an integrated theory of Neuropsychotherapy, a novel approach, combining the latest research in neuroscience, neurobiology, epigenetics and psychology. Health care professionals, as well as members of the general public, will be captivated by a series of case studies that are used to demonstrate a bottom-up, brain based approach to assisting clients to achieve wellness. This book is truly superb!"*

**Dr Claire Scannell, Clinical Psychologist, Sydney, Australia**

*In this book Pieter Rossouw and his colleagues have made a wonderful and exciting contribution to the world of psychology and psychotherapy by bringing into practical reality the importance of an integrative approach to the psychosocial care of others. For years in the real world clinicians have known the value of a holistic integrative approach to caring for the whole person in context but often only whispered words like 'eclectic' and 'holistic' and 'integrative' in describing their practice in fear of ridicule for a lack of purist psychological doctrine. Neuropsychotherapy. Theoretical underpinnings and clinical applications offers real validation to the care that people had known to always work and Dr Rossouw and his colleagues deserve the thanks of many, many practitioners for giving strength and confidence and structure to their practice. I thank them for it and congratulate them wholeheartedly."*

**A/Prof Judith Murray, School of psychology, School of Social Work and Human Services, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.**

The book is now available on Amazon!

<http://www.amazon.com/Neuropsychotherapy-Theoretical-Underpinnings-Clinical-Applications/dp/1502744929/>

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# Neuropsychotherapy workshops & skills classes 2015



## Neuropsychotherapy

Recent findings in Neuroscience demonstrated the unique role of talking therapies as enriched environment to facilitate changes in the brain. Neuropsychotherapy is the "language" used in the interaction between the clinician and the client to guide the client in the process of restructuring the brain towards higher levels of functioning and well-being. It uses information from neurosciences to assist clients suffering from a wide range of biological, psychological and social challenges to apply strategies to down regulate unhelpful neural stress responses and up regulate neural activation towards neural change. Understanding the neurophysiology of these disorders and activation patterns of neural pathways as well as discussing practical applications, assist clinicians greatly to apply more effective strategies to treat depression, anxiety and trauma.

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## Workshops



### **The Adolescent Brain - Utilizing Neurobiological Information to Enhance Mental Health and Learning.**

Continuing Professional Development Hours – 12 hours specialised training

**Brisbane 27 & 28 August 2015**

RBW Hospital, Herston Rd, Herston, Brisbane

**Sydney 10 & 11 Sept 2015**

Portside Centre, Level 5, 207 Kent Street, Sydney

**Melbourne 16 & 17 Oct 2015**

Royal Melbourne Hospital, Grattan Street, Parkville

**Perth 23 & 24 November 2015**

St Catherine's College, Uni WA, Nedlands

### **The Brain & Anxiety: Neurobiological information as Psychotherapeutic Tool**

Continuing Professional Development Hours – 12 hours specialised training

**Sydney 30 April & 1 May 2015**

Portside Centre, Level 5, 207 Kent Street, Sydney

### **The Neuroscience of Depression: New opportunities for Effective Treatment**

Continuing Professional Development Hours – 12 hours specialised training

**Melbourne 31 Jul & 1 Aug 2015**

Royal Melbourne Hospital, Grattan Street, Parkville

### **The Developing Brain & the Neuroscience of Memory and Trauma**

Continuing Professional Development Hours – 12 hours specialised training

**Melbourne 23 & 24 April 2015**

Royal Melbourne Hospital, Grattan Street, Parkville

### **The Social Brain & the Neuroscience of Relationships**

Continuing Professional Development Hours – 12 hours specialised training

**Brisbane 28 & 29 May 2015**

RBW Hospital, Herston Rd, Herston, Brisbane

### **The Ageing Brain & Neuropsychotherapy**

Continuing Professional Development Hours – 6 hours specialised training

**Sydney 20 November 2015**

Portside Centre, Level 5, 207 Kent Street, Sydney

**Melbourne 5 December 2015**

Royal Melbourne Hospital, Grattan Street, Parkville

### **Master Class – Applied Strategies for the Treatment of Anxiety**

Continuing Professional Development Hours – 6 hours specialised training

**Brisbane 27 November 2015**

RBW Hospital, Herston Rd, Herston, Brisbane



## About the Presenter

**DR PIETER J. ROSSOUW**

MAPS; MCClin.; QCA.

Pieter is the Director of the Mediros Unit for Neuropsychotherapy – a company that provides training in Neurobiology and Neuropsychotherapy. He also teaches at the University of Queensland in the School of Psychology and the School of Social

Work and Human Services. Currently he is involved in full time teaching and research in the fields of neurobiology and neuropsychotherapy as well as clinical training for clinicians, psychologists and general practitioners.

Pieter is a member of the Australian Psychological Society and the APS College of Clinical Psychologists. Pieter was a Professor in Clinical Psychology at in South Africa and also taught at Universities in Canada and Holland. He also spearheaded a Psycho-Therapeutic Assistance Program to support people being exposed to trauma. He provided Mental Health training for GPs for the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. In Sydney (1999 - 2010) he worked as Senior Clinical Psychologist - Department of

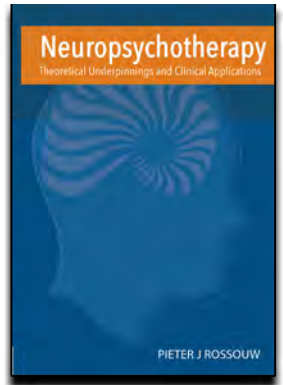
Health and he was the Clinical Director of both St John of God Psychiatric Hospitals (Burwood and Richmond).

Pieter specialises in Neuropsychotherapy and is an expert in anxiety and mood disorders. He has published 7 Scientific Books and 60 scientific articles. He has been involved in research in extensive clinical trials and presented research papers at 50 International Conferences worldwide. Pieter's latest book – **Neuropsychotherapy. Theoretical underpinnings and clinical applications**, was published in November 2014. He is passionate about teaching – and was the recipient of The University of Queensland Faculty of Behavioural Sciences prestigious award for Excellence in Teaching. He provides global leadership in counselling and is invited on regular basis as keynote speaker at leading international conferences.

He is a member of the Global Association for Interpersonal Neurobiology Studies, the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, the International Association for Family Therapy and the Professional Association for Drug and Alcohol Workers, the Australasian Cognitive Neuroscience Society and the Board of the Neuropsychotherapist with fellow researchers Allan Shore, Louis Cozolino, Todd Feinberg and Georg Northoff. He is the director of the Institute for Neuropsychotherapy and the chief editor of the International Journal for Neuropsychotherapy and on the editorial board of The Neuropsychotherapist, Journal Psychology and Clinical Psychiatry and Journal of Psychiatry.



# Book Order Form



Author: Dr PJ Rossouw

Book Title: **Neuropsychotherapy**  
**Theoretical Underpinnings and Clinical Applications**  
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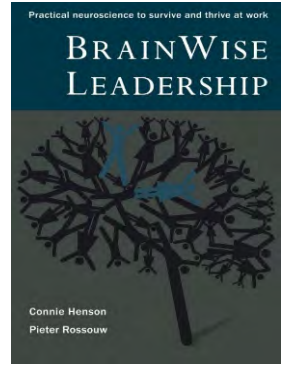
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### 2015 WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

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#### The Brain & Anxiety: Neurobiological information as Psychotherapeutic Tool

*Continuing Professional Development Hours - 12 hours specialised training*  
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### 2015 - NEW RELEASE WORKSHOP

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*Continuing Professional Development Hours - 12 hours specialised training*  
**Brisbane** 27 & 28 August 2015 RBW Hospital, Herston Rd, Herston, Brisbane   
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**Melbourne** 16 & 17 Oct 2015 Royal Melbourne Hospital, Grattan Street, Parkville   
**Perth** 23 & 24 Nov 2015 St Catherine's Coll, Uni WA, 2 Park Rd, Nedlands, Perth

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