

The “Written Frisbee”: The Art of Performing Care at a Distance

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Abstract: *Pandemic and other conditions makes difficult to take care of suffering persons in the usual way (therapy, consultations, accompaniment...). So, the “written Frisbee” approach, invented through a cooperation between Doctor Lucien Kokh and me, offer new possibilities to work at a distance. In this article, one can find some succinct theory about the “written Frisbee” concept, and a clinical illustration, between many others described in my book: “le Frisbee écrit: l’art de prendre soin à distance” (“The written: The Art of Performing Care at a Distance”).*

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*“What does “written Frisbee” mean, Dad?...
-How could I explain it to you in a simple way, my son?
It means loving and directed no-actions, wrapped up in silent love, and dealing blows at a freezing heart...”*

This article issues from my book “le Frisbee écrit: l’art de prendre soin à distance”¹ (*The written: The Art of Performing Care at a Distance*).

The invention of this technique (Bogdan Pavlovici, Lucien Kokh²) opens up new prospects for the treatment of suffering persons. Many of them lack access to the traditional psychiatry, as it is practiced in the therapists consulting rooms (Pavlovici, 2020a; Pavlovici, 2020b).

What makes “written frisbee” different from a simple letter? It is its force of being vectorized by the desire, motivation, engagement, craftsmanship and personal style of the therapist who launch to his patient the first move. This force, which is based on what is going to happen soon in the relationship patient-therapist, is the key to make the patient find his inner force of throwing the frisbee back, in his own way. It is a force that grows progressively, as successive exchanges take place, and enables the patient to gradually discover his own un-known abilities, never put to work previously (Pavlovici, 2019, Grigoros & Ciubara, 2021).

The term” frisbee “seems to be right, because it does not mean only an exchange, but also a game, in which a reciprocal pleasure may be found. A game that sharpens the desire of continuing, amplifying, diversifying... And the desire of improving oneself, of continuing to discover each other’s qualities and inner abilities.

The “written frisbee” technique suggests a new approach, that is to communicate by means of an ”SOS radar” with certain patients who are like nut-shells, carried by the waves of a too long-lived, hard, hostile existence, whose meaning was not understood (.

Under certain circumstances of major suffering, another advantage of ‘the written frisbee’ is that it involves other people and useful performers, with the result of “opening of chain consciousness”. Thus, the shipwrecked person will have the chance of being saved not only by the therapist’s small raft, but by a whole fleet!

I have had the opportunity of gradually discovering the merits of the “written frisbee” method in other clinical contexts:

¹ Bogdan Pavlovici, « le frisbee écrit : l’art de prendre soin à distance », Paris, 2020, éditions Enrick Barbillon

² Lucien Kokh, psychiatrist in Paris

-Emotional violence felt by the therapeutic in certain consultations, when “*the deaf violence*” was present (another concept we developed with a group of therapists and researchers, and described in the magazine “*revue d’hypnose et des thérapies brèves*”, nr 63, published by Le Germe SATAS, Brussels, 2021”)

-The long distance, either geographical or emotional (between two or more persons), or inside the same person (between her own self and her own emotions)

-The family disruptions and very conflictual

-The therapy or consultations with certain types of patients: those who prefer to rest unobserved by the others, because of the long-term shame imprinted on their mind (Luca et al, 2021). However, they may be quite ready to unveil their sufferings by committing them to paper.

I have also noted the fact that the “written Frisbee” is much more efficient when the initial writer is under the effect of an associative hypnotic trance (more details of this are shown in my book). It is beneficial by its impact on the addressee of the “Frisbee”, who will feel obliged to answer accordingly. This trance of the sender will thus become a shared hypnotic trance and will enhance resources and abilities.

Clinical Illustration

When it comes to conflictual, painful divorces, one of the parents often requires a consultation for one or more children of the couple, without informing the other parent or willfully leaving him out, or the other parent may object himself.

Under the French legislation, the consultation in child psychiatry is not a “habitual act”. Thus, if one of the parents is opposed to it, the child psychiatrist is obliged to refuse the consultation required by the other parent. However, the psychiatrist should inform that parent that he may appeal to the Judge of Family Affairs, who will make a statement on the lawfulness of the consultation request.

Another possible way, when a child is considered being in danger, is to make a direct appeal to the Children’s Judge and the Republic Prosecutor.

However, the children’s access to medical-psychological care (often prophylactic) by these different ways is made at the cost of additional judicial and emotional wars, which amplify the already-existing suffering in the family.

The “written frisbee” technique may help in this case, too. It often makes possible an agreement between the two parents to meet the child in consultation and work with both of them. It offers the possibility of a

drawback, return to calm, by exchanges made in writing with an outsider. Particularly in moments of intense, violent stress, which may influence emotionally even the therapist. The latter may clearly define the place and role he wants to play. He can be neither one parent's lawyer against the other, nor a prosecutor or judge, nor a referee, nor a visionary spectator, nor a complaint office worker, nor a judicial expert. He should be a mere companion who has agreed to take care of the children's health.

I am going to illustrate my words by one of the multiple clinical situations in my experience (which is to be found in my above-mentioned book).

Clinical Case

Mrs Charme comes in consultation with Pierrot, her 5-year-old son, because of his low school performances and a great difficulty of focusing his attention and concentration in class. I am made to understand that his parents have been living in a context of a highly conflictual separation for two years. This separation is still painful with daily reproaches, manifestations of hate. During this first consultation, I learn that the boy's father was not informed about her initiative of consulting a child psychiatrist.

Then, I had to explain to Mrs Charme about her legal obligation of informing the boy's father, so that the psychiatric estimation may take place. I also had to explain that working with only one of the parents is non-sensical, because the son is not the real problem. The real problem is the war between his parents, with consequences upon their son. Saying those words, I notice the boy relaxing.

More often than not, when I explain calmly like that, parents come to understand and agree. That was the case with this mother: she accepts to inform the son's father about her intention of having their son consulted by me and about my desire of meeting M. Crispet.

Here is the "*written Frisbee*" exchange which followed:

Mrs Charme's first E-mail to M.Crispet (one copy to me):

Hello,

Pierrot's school difficulties and his lack of attention and autonomy may cause grave trouble...

I contacted a CMPE (child psychiatric center) for a psychiatrically check-up, in order to find out what kind of a help he needs. Today, I met doctor Pavlovici, who can make this estimation. He would like to meet you, too. Here is his E-mail address...

The first Email I, myself, sent to Father, a few days after the one sent by Mother, seeing that I get no answer from the son’s father:

Dear M. Crispet,

As your son’s mother announced you a few days ago, I have the possibility of making an estimation of Pierrot’s state concerning his present symptoms in his school environment. As far as I could learn, it is his class-mistress who shows concern and who called for his mother’s attention. In order to make an estimation as accurate as possible, taking into account all the details of Pierrot’s present life, I absolutely need your agreement, in your capacity of a father.

Could you suggest any of your time availabilities so that we may fix an appointment?

Thanking for your kindness, my best regards, Doctor B. Pavlovici

The father’s answer to my email:

Dear Sir,

I agree to meet you concerning Pierrot’s state on the strict condition that no piece of information should be given to my wife. My condition is strict, I insist on it! No piece of information on our exchange about Pierrot, not even whether I meet you or not, whether I answer your Email or not. No piece of information at all! I will tell you why. If you agree to my condition, I agree to meet you.

Cordially yours, Jeremy Crispet

My answer to father:

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your answer. I am pretty surprised by your answer, but you are probably not acquainted with the fact that a Center of medical-psychological care, like our CMPE, is not a juridical institution and it is neutral to justice. If I am to proceed to a child’s medical estimation, my only reason for that is to check his health condition, find out if he has any suffering, the reason for his suffering and consequently act in accordance with the proper therapeutic methods. Only in case that action is necessary. Thus, I cannot understand why keep it a secret from mother if father gets involved or not. As a doctor, I even find this idea contrary to reason. The Email sent to both of us by your ex-wife shows her desire to cooperate with you and me in order to help your son.

I cannot consider it a wish of cooperation, if you interdict me the simple fact of informing your ex-wife about your agreement to have Pierrot examined.... Moreover, this interdiction utterly blocks me because as a

professional, I do not push a father aside. On the contrary, I even ask for your cooperation. I made it clear for your son's mother that your agreement, in your quality of a father, is indispensable for this medical estimation and further treatment.

She agreed to my terms, so I expected your explicit, not hidden agreement. If you agree to my terms, very well! If not, I will feel obliged to refuse your son's estimation, because his father does not agree with it in a clear, explicit way.

Moreover, under a situation of serious parental dispute (as the case appears to be, considering the tone of your e-mail message) I will require the agreement for your son's medical estimation to be given by both mother and father and make sure that both of them support this appraisal.

Waiting for your more reasonable answer, my best regards

Father's answer to my E-mail:

Dear Sir,

I certainly require that Pierrot should continue his consultations in your office. However, I strongly ask you to give my wife only information concerning Pierrot. No kind of other type of information about me. If you do not refuse to examine Pierrot, I will certainly desire to meet you

Cordially yours, Jeremy Crispet

My answer to father:

Dear M. Crispet,

When the parents are separated and are in conflict, I always see them apart and I give no information about what they tell me about each other. If I were to do that, I would be condemned deontologically and even juridically (for non-respect of the professional secret). All I ask you is to give me your agreement to answer your son's mother like that: "*Your son's father has sent me his agreement, so I am ready to start his psychiatric check-up.*"

Otherwise, I may find myself in a false position towards her. I told her I agreed to perform Pierrot's estimation only if his father agrees to it. That is all I am asking you to do.

So, thank you for this necessary agreement and wish you a pleasant evening.

Dr Pavlovici

Father's answer:

Dear Sir, you may tell her I give my agreement

Cordially yours, J Crispet

My e-mail to the boy’s mother:

Dear Madam,

Pierrot’s father agreed to Pierrot’s estimation. Thus, we can keep the appointment that we had made in the meantime.

All the best to you, Dr Pavlovici

Mother’s answer:

Dear Sir,

Oh! I feel relieved now! Thank you very much! See you on Wednesday!

Cordially yours, Valerie Charme

A new E-mail sent to me by M. Crispet, the next day after his last one:

Dear Sir,

Here is my point of view about Pierrot:

I remark that he is a happy, even very happy child. He talks a lot; he has many ideas. It is a pleasure to see him, to listen to him. It is easy for him to talk to both adults, or younger.

He plays a lot and he is very creative. He has dreams. He has a lot of imagination. I could say he has a very active, rich inner world. That is why I am rather skeptical about the real necessity of his being consulted by a psychiatrist. Nevertheless, there are always uncertainties in life, so I feel interested in your opinion.

If I were asked to point out certain aspects of his social life, I would say that he has few or almost no friends, as if he were not at all interested to have any.

However, he gets in touch with people easily, without any restraints. He has good relations with the others. He talks and listens. He may even laugh with the others. But he does not miss them if they are not around.

Concerning the problems signaled by his teacher, she remarks that Pierrot refuses to write if she is not at his side. In exchange, he is very active and does not cause trouble in class. He reads perfectly, with a good intonation and fully understands what he reads. It is a pleasure to hear him reading.

He can make quicker answers than his older brothers, aged 13 and 15. Neither myself, nor his teacher detect any problem in connection with his intellectual abilities.

I could say he is not attracted by school. He finds it difficult to come to terms with the educational system, with the grown-ups ‘expectations.

However, that does not prevent him from attending the courses. Sometimes he writes with no mistakes. He has a logical mind. Maybe he rejects being constraint to a rigid girdle. He dreams in class, he lives in his world of dreams, according to his teacher (I, myself, was like that: seeing a cloud distracted my attention). That is what drives the teacher crazy and consequently she draws a troubling picture of him. Her concern is different from that of the child.

As regards his training and evolution, there are certain things to be taken into account by his parents.

In my opinion, Pierrot has been highly protected by his mother, who still calls him “my baby”. There was a time when whatever bad happened to Pierrot, somebody else was responsible for that.

There is a certain type of relationship with his mother, typical of her family, a tendency of stifling the other. I probably participate in it, but less than a woman does. This practice is typical of a woman... And it leads to a confusion of roles to be played which is evident in her attitudes, nick-names, gestures, looks...an invisible language which may stifle, block...

I would say that each of us needs his/her own vital space, which is necessary to help you to grow up. And sometimes a little void to be filled later.

Pierrot sometimes flies into a rage against his bigger brothers, if he does not get what he wants. I often try to make him feel a little frustration, to cut down his all-powerful feeling of the third child, the youngest child. He is clearly very spoiled affectively and materially. He is sometimes stubborn. He is willing to do what really interests him.

He probably needs to grow up, to become responsible and self-dependent. I try to accompany him on this way. Last year he probably grew up more than in the previous years.

Here are a few points that reveal his super-protection and all-powerfulness:

-he still uses pampers when he is with his mother, but not with me. Since last August, I have woken him up at mid-night and made him go to the loo.

-he cannot still swim properly. I made him join a swimming course, let him learn at ease because he is under stress, he has no confidence in himself, though he masters the technique of swimming. He is always afraid of the cold.

-I had to fight with his mother for months to make him get rid of the baby's high chair in the kitchen.

I think, it must be also an impact of the family situation on him, even if these difficulties existed before. Sometimes he breaks into speaking about the family situation. Everything happens as if Pierrot would like to keep to his nutshell and never leave it. He suffers from a constant sensation of cold and keeps his hood even if he does not need it.

Here are certain remarks, maybe not always evident, but made by other people too.

If you wish, we may fix an appointment.

Cordially yours, J. Crispet

Father’s third mail, the next day after the one above and received before I myself could make an answer:

Dear Sir,

Here is a document outside the family: the first term school report. It may be a neutral opinion about Pierrot, but rather similar to what I myself can notice.

Cordially yours, J. Crispet

My answer to father’s 3 emails:

Good evening, Sir, thank you for this detailed description of your son. Even if I had the opportunity of seeing him and his mother only once in order to make his acquaintance, I, myself, am almost convinced that he is a child endowed with lots of talents and personal resources. It is always sad to see that somebody having such a good potential cannot show, express his real value...

There is a certain context, as evoked by you and Pierrot’s mother, that may prevent a child from revealing his potential. There may be certain rigid exigencies imposed on the small children by teachers with little training and understanding of each child’s personality and talents and unaware of the existence of a possible unhappy family context. Even before proceeding to Pierrot’s estimation, my intuition urges me to tell you that it will be more efficient for us to work together and “take care” of the context in which he lives, rather than take care of himself...

Sorry for this short cut, but I have had a 20-year practice of consulting children and their families, and I have gained some experience.

As a result of your very detailed description, that you have made, including the teacher’s point of view, I would prefer to meet you but not before seeing Pierrot twice, successively.

Awaiting your answer, I wish you a pleasant evening, Dr B. Pavlovici

Father's answer:

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your answer. Your proposal suits me to perfection. I expect you to contact me as soon as you have seen Pierrot closely. See you soon, cordially yours, J. Crispet

Epilogue

While reading this clinical account, some readers might make the following remark: such situations may be resolved by a simple phone call. If something like this is possible, it is obviously to be put into practice! However, my experience has revealed to me that in case of over-reacting and sensitive people going to the limit of paranoia, the therapist is interested in resorting to the "written Frisbee" technique. This technique enables the therapist to take his necessary time of reflection and to find the right words, acting like verbal bistouries to frame accurate phrases, rephrase thoughts into "blows dealt at the slumber of the awareness".

Moreover, in certain cases when the "cudgel of justice" is since a long time present, even before the therapist is coming upon the stage, it risks to hit the one who offers help. Thus, it is much better to have some written evidence of the exchanges, suggested as therapeutic care. This suppose that the one who use the "written Frisbee" technique, could keep in touch with his own professional and deontological ethics.

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