

## Are Apps in the EAP's Future?

by Dan Cohen, MSW

For EA Professionals, an effective intervention often includes providing resources and assigning “homework” to their clients. The advent, increasing availability and adoption of smart phone and iPad technologies offers new opportunities and cutting edge tools for savvy clinicians.

Tucked away among the tens of thousands of smartphone apps are a small, but growing number of health and mental health related apps. Developed by mental health and medical professionals as well as neuroscientists, these apps seek to leverage the anytime, easy access of these devices to help address a variety of emotional, and wellness challenges.

One such app is **Panic Control**, developed by Dr. Laurie Richer, a University of California, San Francisco, Professor of Psychiatry, who has many years of experience treating clients with panic attacks and other anxiety disorders. “My goal in co-creating Panic Control,” says Dr. Richer, “is to provide cognitive behavioral techniques proven to help reduce the symptoms of a panic attack.”

*“The Panic Control app serves to immediately remind sufferers of the medical and psychiatric facts about panic attacks and help alleviate some of their worst fears. It then provides guided instructions on how to relax (decrease heart rate and other physiological responses) and reframe thoughts via psychologically insightful mantras.”*

So now you know about this app and can assign it to your anxiety-ridden client. But what about meeting the needs of your other EAP clients? Certainly you could spend the time combing through apps yourself, and downloading them to check out their quality and relevance. The fact is though, that apps like Panic Control faces the challenge of discoverability – they can easily get lost in an ocean of apps vying for attention. This is a problem that most health and wellness apps face.

A new resource, Healthful Apps (<http://www.appsforall.net>) was developed by a social worker to identify the best mental health and wellness related apps and group them into categories for easy access and use. For clients suffering from anxiety and other emotional issues, the categories include:

- “Relaxation”
- “Memory & Focus”
- “Mood Lifters”

Clients who are caregivers may benefit from apps in the “Caregiving”, “Alzheimers” and “Autism” categories.

Finally clients with health related concerns such as smoking, obesity, and others may find helpful resources in the “Dialysis” and “Health Tracker” categories.

**Panic Control** is one of the twenty-five apps recommended in the **Relaxation** category. Other apps in “Relaxation” provide various helpful approaches to managing stress.

Other categories of apps focus on the following:

**Memory & Focus** – groups the very best of the brain fitness apps, often adapted from successful online exercises. Sample apps in this category include “Memory Matrix” and “Brain Power/Ambiscience”.

**Mood Lifters** – a variety of clever apps, which include gratitude journals, uplifting music, humor, and photographic images. Sample apps in this category include “Gratitude Journal” and “Live Happy”.

**Caregiving** – health and wellness videos, a geriatric care manager with a 500 question FAQ, medical information resources such as WebMD, and family medical information storage utilities. Sample apps include “Elder 411” and “Video MD”.

**Alzheimer’s** – tools to reduce agitation, increase engagement, and improve quality of life. Sample apps in this category include “iKnowYou” and “Alzheimer’s Cards”.

**Autism** – apps to enhance autism spectrum sufferers who have impaired communication skills. Sample apps in this category include “Proloquo2Go” and “ABA Receptive Identification – By Class”.

**Dialysis** – dialysis is a grueling, boring experience. Apps in this category are operable with one hand, with an eye toward engaging the patient in an upbeat fashion, thereby improving the dialysis experience. Sample apps include “Quotationary” and “Art Studio”.

**Health Tracker** – apps include sight and hearing tests, as well as the ability to monitor glucose levels, blood pressure, headaches, asthma, tremors, sleep cycles, and moods. Sample apps include “Sleep Cycle Alarm Clock” and “Moods”.

The various app categories can be purchased individually by either the EA professional or the client for under a dollar each. The entire Healthful Apps

collection can be acquired for under \$3.00. For more information, visit <http://www.appsforall.net>

*Dan Cohen MSW is a social worker with a lifetime of experience connecting people with quality-of-life enhancing technology. He created Apps for All (<http://www.appsforall.net>) because he believes that smartphone and iPad apps have the potential to improve the lives of the clients we care about. He can be reached at [dan@appsforall.net](mailto:dan@appsforall.net).*