# Can You Hear Me Now? Smart Phone as Therapist

May 25, 2010 By David Evans

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I have a smart phone. I won't say which one, as I don't believe in free advertising, but I use it more than I ever thought I would. I was out on a long walk with my partner this weekend exploring our new town and ended up near the top of a hill on a series of small winding streets with lots of dead ends. We came to a crossroads, and weren't sure which way to turn. I just hit the maps application on my phone, and boom--the path back to the main road was right there in front of me. Sometimes I like getting a little bit lost, but when you're hot, your feet hurt and your blood sugar is crashing, it's nice to know that you're not going to spend extra minutes or hours trying to find the right way home.

That's just one thing my phone can do now that most phones weren't capable of just a few years ago. I've also got alarms set for a number of things I have to remember to do each day. I do a lot of my social networking via smart phone applications. Heck, I even refill my prescriptions on my phone: And soon, according to researchers, I might even be able to engage in psychotherapy through a mobile phone application.

In a cool story on the NPR website, Michele Trudeau, outlines a number of different researchers who are currently testing several different types of mobile technologies to help people living with mental illness. These include a couple of applications--with one specifically geared to teens--to help people track their moods and do other types of psychotherapy "homework," as well as a programmable wrist watch that helps remind people with schizophrenia to practice a technique that reduces auditory hallucinations.

Given the high cost of mental health care, the steep co-payments, and the fact that plenty of shrinks don't even accept insurance anymore, having a patient-controlled therapy booster in your pocket or purse would be terrific. I'll be watching the development of this new frontier of technology eagerly and will report back with juicy tidbits as they become available.

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