

## Fake Psychologists

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Below are excerpts from Dr. Avidan Milevsky, Associate Professor of Psychology at Ariel University, Israel, blog entitled, “The Dangers of Fake Psychologists”.

“Over the past few years, a dangerous trend has emerged where well-intentioned individuals who have been told in the past that they were “good listeners” decide to pursue a career in mental health counseling. Instead of enrolling in a university and securing a solid education in mental health, they enroll in various types of quasi-academic programs and in a matter of a year or two at best, or several months at worst, end up with a diploma or degree and begin offering psychological services to the masses.

The reason the proliferation of these fake psychologists is legally permissible is that although you are not allowed to call yourself a psychologist without actually having a state license in psychology, you are permitted to call yourself a “psychotherapist” without any oversight. Hence, graduates of all these various programs and degrees refer to themselves as “psychotherapist” and are able to treat patients experiencing the most severe mental illness.”

Dr. Milevsky concluded:

“Considering the complexity of mental health training, the average consumer may find it overwhelming when trying to decide where to seek services. This is why state boards in mental health exist. These state organizations review the training of potential

mental health professionals and then certify that the training is appropriate. One seeking mental health services should, at a minimum, verify that the psychologist is certified by the state to offer services in a professional and ethical manner.

Below is the reaction of a seasoned clinical psychologist to the above blog that I believe all professional practitioners can agree with:

1. Having certain letters after your name does not automatically mean that you are better clinician in general, nor is it a guarantee that you will not do any harm
2. It is possible for someone to act ethically and be a great clinician without an official degree
3. A critical element of clinical work is the ability to set aside personal values, worldviews, and agendas in order to fully understand and see the validity in the client's world
4. Excellent supervision and serious introspective work are key to clinical training,
5. I do not think that a relatively brief course in CBT or any kind of therapy can adequately train someone to be a competent therapist. However, beyond clinical training there is licensure. Licensure serves two main purposes. First, it provides a governmental/professional certification to the public that this person has at least the necessary qualifications to do the job. Second, it protects the public by making clinicians legally accountable for their actions.

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