**Supervision with Dr. Jennifer Laffier**

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**Biography**

Dr. Jennifer Laffier is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at Ontario Tech University and a licensed Creative Arts Therapist and Psychotherapist with over 29 years’ experience in the mental health field. As a licensed practitioner working with all ages, she specializes in Trauma therapy, Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Eco-Therapy (nature), Digital Wellness, and Positive Psychology approaches (resilience, flourishing). She researches and teaches in the areas of human development and mental health in the digital age. Her research topics include wellness during times of crisis, digital-self intelligence, digital wellness, emotional intelligence, life-long learning, ageism, bullying, social media, gaming, psychoeducation, and the connection between mental health and creativity, play, and nature. She is a Master trainer for Mental Health First Aid from the Mental Health Commission of Canada, and a member of their advisory and research team.

As a practicing Creative Arts Therapist, she has worked with people of all ages using the arts (traditional and technology) to support their mental health. As a founding member of ‘Global Art Therapists’ she has worked across the globe delivering art therapy programs for at risk individuals, including child soldiers in Zimbabwe and Zambia, refugees in Europe, natural disaster victims in Greece and Austria, and remote communities in Canada’s northern regions. She is trained in suicide intervention and has conducted assessments for schools and organizations. She currently consults with post-secondary institutions, schools, companies, and government organizations to develop workplace mental health strategies and digital wellness policies. Dr. Laffier combines her experiences from research, teaching, and therapeutic practice for an informed approach to well-being.

Dr. Laffier is the Director of the Mental Health in the Digital Age Lab at the Faculty of Education, Ontario Tech University. This lab is a virtual research hub that explores how technology is impacting human development and well- being across the lifespan. Research and projects focus on research to practice ideas for optimum well-being and learning in a digital age. The lab is a collaboration of work from Faculty, graduate students, experts in the field, and the lab research team. It is the lab's mission to support individuals and communities by conducting research and outreach work in the following 7 key areas:

## *Individual and Community Mental Health*

1. *Technology’s role in human development and well-being*
2. *Digital Wellness and Digital-Self Intelligence®*
3. *Socio-emotional learning and Emotional Intelligence*
4. *Positive psychology; resilience, authenticity, and flourishing*
5. *The intersection of learning and mental health*
6. *The value of Psychoeducation*

She is the mother of two children in elementary school and lives in the Uxbridge area. She learned many lessons about well-being and effective educational practices as an at-risk youth. Growing up in the carnival she experienced hybrid teaching, long before hybrid learning was a thing! She played on the Ontario Lacrosse team in her late youth and University years (and now watches her own children play lacrosse). Since leaving high school she has been enrolled in some sort of training or program every year. Why? Because she believes in lifelong learning and the value of being a student! She completed a B.A. in Psychology and Fine Arts from Waterloo university before completing two Masters at the Adler Institute of Professional Psychology in Toronto and Chicago (where she commuted for 4 years!) then completing her Ph.D. in Psychology and Mental Health. In between these degrees she completed 14 certifications including Trauma Informed Care, Mindfulness, Eco-therapy, Risk and Threat Assessment, Play and Lego Therapy, and Critical Stress Management. If she could change careers, she would be a farmer or start a therapy farm. She is passionate about supporting older adults, farmers, at-risk populations, trauma victims, veterans, and indigenous communities. Her goal is to work towards reducing ageism, mental health stigma, discrimination, and the digital divide to support the mental health of all Canadians. Her interests include spending time outdoors, playing board games, being with her kids, and trying any new hobby when she has time. She believes in the value of being vulnerable, authentic, and laughing at yourself as a self-care strategy. She also believes that language matters; you can give or take away hope by the language you use. Her phrase is WHY NOT? Anything is possible!

**Research Areas**

My research falls under the umbrella of Psychology and Educational Psychology. My main area of focus is Mental Health and Well-being. I have conducted research and have published or presented in the following areas over the last 30 years: (entries in italics are current research projects)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Well-being across the lifespan** | **Mental Health and technology** | **Education & Student achievement** |
| * *The importance of Self-care* * *Mental health approaches around the globe (international comparisons)* * *Nature and mental health (Eco-Therapy)* * *The Creative Arts and at-risk youth* * *Play and creativity for wellness* * *Trauma informed practices in schools and communities* * *Older adults and loneliness* * *Ageism* * *Age friendly communities* * Holistic well-being models * Youth suicide * Social-emotional learning (SEL) * Self-regulation * Coping strategies * Bullying/Cyberbullying * Conflict Management skills * Cognitive Behavior Therapy or Strategies * Mental health for rural communities and farmers | * *Digital Wellness as a 21st Century Skill* * *Digital Citizenship and Literacy* * *Digital-self Intelligence (copyright framework)* * *Social media and mental health* * *Gaming and mental health* * *Virtual Reality and mental health* * *Media and trauma* * *Virtual trauma informed practices* * *Mental health support for students in virtual spaces* * Addressing the Digital Divide * Youth suicide in virtual spaces * Replace vs. Enhance theory of healthy technology use (copyright framework) * The role of moderators and mediators in studying mental health in the digital age * Making and creating with Technology tools to promote well-being | * *Stress and online learning* * *Transition supports for high school and post-secondary students* * *Play based learning* * *Creativity as a 21st Century skill* * *Emotional intelligence* * *Life-long learning and older adults* * *Makerspaces in schools* * Risk-assessments in schools * Mental Health accommodations * Pre-service teachers’ well-being * Mental Health training for pre-service teachers and teachers * Suicide intervention training in schools * Coping skills in students * Small Learning Teams * Activist leaning * Empowerment |

**Theoretical Frameworks**

The following are theoretical frameworks I and/or graduate students have worked from in the past or currently:

* Positive psychology (Authentic happiness, flourishing, identity formation, flow, resilience, nimble)
* Empowerment theories (influence, power, control, self-efficacy, resources)
* Human development theories (identity, coping skills, creativity, self-expression, social health)
* Humanistic theories (self-care, trust, validation, authenticity, vulnerability)
* Emotional and social intelligence (EI, SEL, Emotional regulation, self-reflection/ awareness)
* Mental health and well-being theories, models, and frameworks
* Learning theories- play, emotion based, cognitive psychology, activist, psychoeducation,
* Technology- Kranzbergs’s first law of technology, disruptive technologies, ethics and human responsibility, global challenges

**Research Methodology**

Often in psychology-based research, mixed methods (Qualitative and Quantitative) are used. My research has included the following approaches:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Research Design** | **Data Collection Methods** | **Data Analysis Methods** |
| Qualitative:   * Action Based research (as an Adlerian Therapist I am heavily centered on action-based research for social change) * Phenomenology * Narrative research * Case study * Grounded Theory * Ethnography * Art based research   Quantitative:   * Survey research * Correlational research | * Pre and post psychological testing * Pre and post surveys * Observations * Environmental scan * Literature review * Focus groups * Interview * public data case studies | * Qualitative content analysis * Narrative analysis. * Discourse analysis. * Thematic analysis. * Grounded theory (GT) * Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) * Regression Analysis * Qualitative analysis with Nvivo |

**Supervision support**

I remember all too well my own experience with supervision and attempt to replicate the positive aspects of that journey. That includes developing a trusting and supportive relationship with my students where they can flourish and work through challenges and opportunities. I try to make myself available when needed, provide as many supports as necessary, and come with positivity and encouragement! I will determine the type of supervision and level of support for each student based on personal needs and experiences. For example, I consider your past research work, strengths, learning needs, homelife, expectations, work style, and personality. Some students want more guidance, and some want more independence. Being sensitive and nimble to the needs of others is something I have learned as a therapist for 30 years.

**The following are key elements of my supervision:**

1. Graduate Package for students (GPS)- includes information on scholarly research, the thesis process, helpful resources, a detailed thesis template, and mental health supports for your journey
2. Regular meetings as determined by the student (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, and even last minute!)
3. Opportunities for in person meetings if needed
4. The creation of a shared drive for the journey
5. Research support (helpful articles will be forwarded as I come across them or I will assist in research searches when struggling for direction)

**Expectations for the student**

Being a graduate student can be a wonderful, yet demanding journey. It is important that students are committed to this journey and meet graduate level expectations. This includes:

* + - 1. Stay in regular contact
      2. Meet agreed upon deadlines for research work
      3. Accomplish agreed upon weekly or monthly tasks
      4. Reach out and communicate when struggling- take care of yourself!

If you would like to schedule a meeting to discuss possible supervision, contact me as soon as possible. Please review my material to make sure there is a fit for your research agenda.

I wish you all the best in your graduate studies journey,

Dr. Jennifer Laffier

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