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Practitioner Profile

An Interview with
Roseann Adams

Roseann Adams was born into a working-class Italian immigrant family in Chicago. Her father had been very poor as a child and delighted in the opportunities he found to earn money and provide for his family. Money was not a taboo topic in their household. From a young age she and her younger brothers were exposed to information about their family income, savings, spending, and debt. The children were often in on financial decision-making. It surprised Roseann when she learned that other kids she knew did not have similar information about their own family's financial matters. She grew up with an appreciation for the value and power of money and remembers looking forward to the experience of earning her own income.

Roseann earned a bachelor's degree in Language Arts Education and started her professional life as an elementary school teacher. After a few years, she transitioned to a career in adult education and training and development. Through the experiences of watching students learn, she became very interested in the processes of cognitive and behavioral change. Around that time she sought the help of a psychotherapist in the process of negotiating separation and individuation from her own traditional, some might say enmeshed, immigrant family. She felt the power and positive force of a good therapy experience and began to think that being a therapist might be a good profession for her.

In 1991 Roseann received a Master's in Social Work from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She has been a psychotherapist, life coach and organizational consultant for more than 25 years. Roseann has been affiliated with the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute at Wellesley College for more than 20 years and has been a frequent presenter at JBMTI conferences. She is a contributing author to the book, "How Connections Heal: Stories from Relational-Cultural Theory". Her professional mission is to provide therapy and coaching to individuals and organizations and to study, teach and write about the resilience of the human spirit, the transformative power of positivity and the healing power of human connection.

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Q. Define what you do professionally.

A. I provide therapy, coaching and organizational consulting and training as an independent practitioner.

Q. What activities encompass your professional responsibilities?

A. Individual, couple, and family therapy. Executive coaching. Organizational consulting and training.

Q. How long have you been engaged in your professional activity?

A. Nearly 30 years.

Q. What led you to your professional calling?

A. I have always been fascinated by people's life stories, curious about the qualities that enable people to overcome adversity with grit, resilience and creative strength. One of my early career teaching positions was in a job training program for low income women who were residents of a Chicago housing project. Students who successfully completed the program were the ones who developed job skills, but also changed their vision of what was possible for them. Watching my students make powerful personal changes to improve their lives inspired me to go back to school to get a master's degree in social work. I feel fortunate to earn a living doing work that enables me to help others achieve their personal and professional goals and live their dreams.

Q. How are you paid?

A. Coaching clients and organizations pay on a fee for service basis. Clients referred or who self-refer for mental health services are able to use their health insurance to pay for psychotherapy services. I am an in-network provider with several insurance companies and also receive referrals from several employee assistance programs.

Q. Do you work alone or do you have a team?

A. I have a solo practice based in Chicago and have a large nation-wide network of colleagues with whom I often collaborate. My team of expert resources includes other mental health service providers, physicians, clergy, attorneys, and financial counselors.

Q. What theoretical framework guides your work when dealing with clients?

A. My approach is primarily solution-focused. I draw on a variety of theories depending on the client's presenting problems and goals: family systems, cognitive behavioral, dialectical behavioral, positive psychology, and relational-cultural. Addressing the emotional and inter-personal issues related to money is often part of the assessment and treatment process.

Q. What needs to happen so that 10 years from now we can say that financial therapy is a respected field of study?

A. It would be great if there were a post-graduate training curriculum and a certificate program. We also need models for collaboration between mental health clinicians/coaches and financial counselors. Financial therapy should become part of every graduate school curriculum in the mental health professions and financial professionals should be educated in the psychology of money.

Q. What benefits can the financial therapy association provide to others doing work that is similar to your professional activities?

A. When I was in graduate school I don't remember learning anything in any of my classes related to talking to clients about money and their financial circumstances. I always thought a complete assessment of a client's functioning required obtaining information about income, debt, and financial resources, but often because I didn't think I should and didn't know how to ask a client about money, I didn't. If a client was suffering from anxiety or depression how could I fully assess the impact of those symptoms on the person's life without talking about money? The financial crisis of 2008 is what finally forced me to find ways to talk about money. Now it is rare for me to do an initial assessment for a psychotherapy or coaching client without talking about income, debt, and financial assets. Financial Therapy Association provides information, instruction and connection to resources. The conferences and webinars provide opportunities for learning, practice and networking.

Q. If others are interested in finding out more about you personally and professionally, where can they obtain this information?

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