My moves to becoming a 'Digital Odds Changer'

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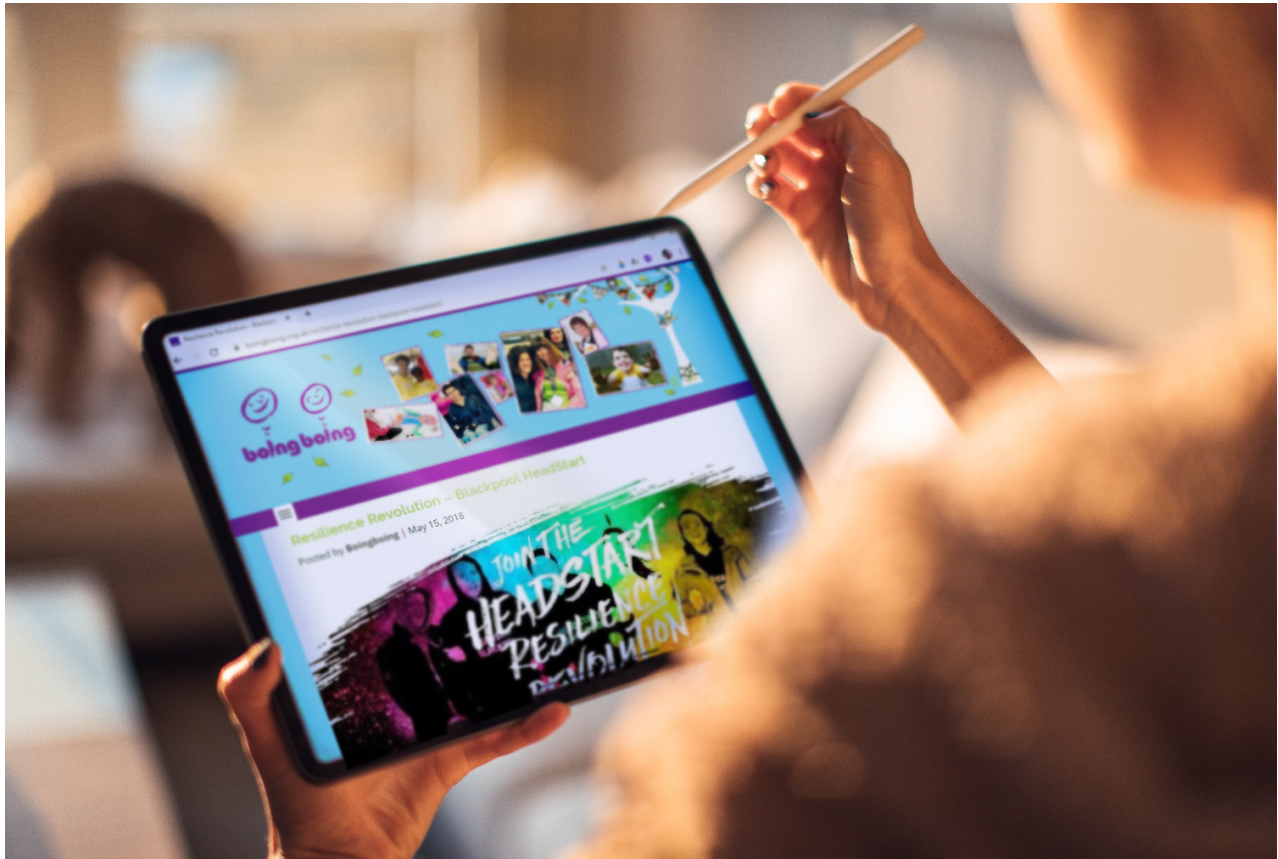
My moves to becoming a 'Digital Odds Changer' – Dr Amanda M L Taylor-Beswick

Thank you to the Centre of Resilience for Social Justice (CRSJ), Boingboing and the Resilience Revolution for the invitation to write this blog. I'm writing about the issues I have been raising on Twitter regarding the digital technology choices people are making, in response to the #COVID19 crisis, in education, social work and social care. In fact, I have been sharing my concerns with these professions regarding what I call 'convenience over consciousness' in relation to digital choices and uses for a number of years. I've been talking on, and offline, about the length of time it has taken us to realise how digital platforms and apps gather our personal information, and the degree to which our rights can be compromised. Due to our lack of attention to platform privacy statements and policies, technology companies have and continue to use our private information to, amongst other things, target us with ads, track us or survey us online. How many of us have clicked 'accept' to indicate that we have read the small print when we downloaded a new app?

The current urgency to connect with others on digital platforms, without thinking through the range of implications, has only increased my concern. Hence why I am pleased to take up Boingboing's challenge to offer some solutions to the problems I raise, including how to keep ourselves and others safer in the online. It is the CRSJ and Boingboing's

focus on inequalities and resilience, captured in the phrase 'beating the odds, whilst also changing the odds' that I am particularly keen to connect with. I am interested to think about how when making digital choices aimed at supporting people, organisations pay attention to people's right to privacy or a life free from interference, they guard against the potential to replace one set of adversities with others.

Before moving on it is important to point out that I am not a tech expert; I am a social work academic, with an interest in how digitalisation is shaping the social world, sociality and therefore social need. In my professional role, I am part of a network of people that think and write about the ethical use of technologies in human services and also digital preparedness in education, social work and social care. You can learn more about our work by clicking here: husITa. I primarily use my Twitter feed as a means to spark conversations. Through thinking out loud on Twitter I hope to help generate collective solutions to the problems that the digital shift raises for education, social work and social care.

With regards to the current crisis, I think it is fair to say that none of us had imagined our world to have changed in the way it has and to have so quickly. And of course those of us who work with people, even us tech evangelists, had not forecasted the degree to which the digital would become so relevant to the work that we do. But here we are, in unfamiliar times, where personal digital knowledge and skills do not always translate easily or appropriately into our work lives. Few of us have been educated or received the training required to critically analyse the digital platforms more commonly used. We are therefore at risk of choosing platforms without understanding the implications of entering these spaces or using these tools. This problem is not unique to education or social care. Indeed within the last week the Ministry of Defense halted the use of the increasingly popular communications platform Zoom due to the security and privacy risks use of this tool incurs.

Given our current need to use digital methods, it is important that we consider, together, how best to handle the risks that digital tools can present. We need to make more informed digital decisions so that our practices remain ethical and effective; so that platform usage does not compromise our values, ethics and in the case of professionals, those that we serve. I do not claim to have all the answers, or even many solutions. What I do have is a view on how we might begin to go about critically analysing digital platforms. I have thoughts about how we might embed the digital into our practices and strategies that might be helpful to each of us as we make our own ethical digital shift.

In keeping with the premise of Boingboing's work, here are some 'resilient moves' that could be useful to the idea of 'beating the odds whilst also changing the odds' when making digital choices to support the work that we do:

1. The following task is designed to help you review of your individual digital choices, practices and behaviours online: <u>rise articulate task</u> The purpose of this task is to map out where your personal digital choices and usage might clash with your professional. It will assist you to identify and make changes where necessary and support you to help others become more digitally aware.

2. Before using a digital platform, review the platform privacy statement and data collection policy, so that decisions about platform choices are informed. It is important that organisations know what information is being collected about service-users or clients before inviting them into a digital space. For example: look for any indicators that personal information will be collected, how it will be used and who it will be shared with.

3. Consider platforms, such as <u>Wire</u> or <u>Signal</u>, that whilst come with a small cost, the cost means they often do not need to collect, share or sell data to sustain their business model. Try to avoid, and where possible challenge the illusion of 'free' in the context of the online. The costs of access and usage are our data and privacy, and targeted ads that relentlessy pursue us to get our attention. Ask yourself how many times you have gone online to carry out a specific task and ended up somewhere else, doing something you never intended. For example, and I cannot possibly be alone in this, purchasing something I didn't really want, need or could afford.

4. Remember, regardless of the Government and <u>Information Commissioners Office</u> (ICO) proposed loosening of GDPR and E- Privacy laws, people's rights remain. I suggest reading: Eubanks <u>Automating Inequality</u> to understand the implications of data generation and conflation in the digital age.

5. If you or an organisation insist on using, for example Zoom, Facebook, WhatsApp, please be clear about the need to communicate, in accessible and digestible terms, the data implications of bringing people into these spaces.

Fundamentally, ethics, practice principles and human rights exist regardless of the place and space in which we practice. If we as educators, social care and social workers are not tuned in and ready to challenge digital social injustice who is? Convenience over consciousness is a very dangerous premise. I certainly accept that I don't have all the answers, but let's keep having the conversations, and most importantly, model ethical practices wherever we can.

If you have any thoughts, ideas or challenges to share please do be in touch. I am really keen to connect with others who might share my concerns.

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Queen's University Belfast

Jisc <u>Top 50</u> 2015
Gov <u>Tech Woman Leader</u> 2019
EdTech50 <u>EDUCATOR AWARD</u> 2020

The Resilience Revolution Final Research Report 2016-2022

<u>Resilience Revolution's Final Research Report 2016-2022</u>

This report presents the research and evaluation of the Resilience Revolution programme (2016-2022).

The Resilience Revolution is an innovative whole town approach to building resilience, made possible by funding from The National Lottery Fund's HeadStart programme. Funding was available between 2016 and 2022, across 6 areas nationally in the UK with the purpose of testing and learning new ways to support young people's mental health (ages 10-16).

In Blackpool, the programme took the bold step of developing a vision for the whole town; giving everyone who lived, worked or volunteered in the town the opportunity to get involved. The Resilience Revolution embraced co-production as a way to design and test innovative projects. Co production meant a range of people, with different expertise, working together, as equals towards shared goals.

The Research Ready Communities pilot continued

For the past year and a half Boingboing has been working on a Research Ready Communities pilot project in Blackpool alongside the National Institute for Health Research as part of their Under-served Communities programme. Typically, much of the funding for health research in the UK goes to universities in London, Oxford and Cambridge, but health research is needed the most in places like Blackpool, where the harmful impacts of health inequalities are worst felt.

Loops – a review

On 22nd February Grace and Lauren, members of the Activist Alliance, attended the show Loops at the Blackpool Grand Theatre. It was a play made in collaboration with Liverpool Everyman + Playhouse, 20 Stories High theatre company and, "a brilliant group of activists and artists who all shared important stories of what their experiences were, with courage, honesty and jokes".

Watch our workshops: how to do community co-research on health equity

Created as part of the ongoing Community Solutions for Health Equity project that Boingboing Foundation are proudly part of, we are pleased to share recordings of a series of workshops held recently in Blackpool. These workshops are free resources to be taken advantage of by any community members or organisations looking for a beginner's guide to developing the research skills and knowledge needed to explore health inequalities in coastal areas.

The Boingboing Resilience Framework

The Resilience Framework is a handy table that summarises 'what works' when supporting children and young people's resilience according to the Resilience Research base. The Resilience Framework forms a cornerstone of our research and practice. On this page we have pulled together lots of useful links so you can find out all about the Resilience Framework.

Prevention in Health and Social Care Inquiry Submissions

Co-leaders of the Resilience Revolution made not one, but two submissions to the UK Parliament 'Prevention in Health and Social Care' inquiry last month. The inquiry is about preventing ill health, now and in the future.

A guide to becoming more eco-friendly in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast

Hi, I'm Maya, and I wanted to say a big thank you to you for reading. These guides were created to help people in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast become more environmentally friendly, without feeling too overwhelmed by climate issues. They were produced as part of the Boingboing Activist in Residence project, which gave me the opportunity to work as an Eco-activist in Residence at Blackpool Victoria Hospital. I decided that I wanted to use this role to make two guides: one for local residents, and another for Blackpool Teaching Hospitals' Green Champions.

An introduction to the Research Ready Communities pilot

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Online Resilience Forum – 3rd April 2023 – Psychological distress and resilience among a population affected by conflict

This Online Resilience Forum from CRSJ and Boingboing is for anyone interested in resilience research. This month's forum is on 'psychological distress and resilience among a population affected by conflict' presented by University of Brighton PhD student Omar S Rasheed.

Older Entries