

## Kirk Schneider for APA President

**From:** Sarah Kamens

**Sent:** Wednesday, September 15, 2021 1:48 PM

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Voting has opened for the future American Psychological Association (APA) President-elect and Board of Directors Member-at-Large Today thus marks an opportunity to make an impact on the future of our field. For President-elect, I am proud to support Kirk Schneider, a widely respected leader in humanistic-existential psychology and former Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Kirk's career as both a scholar and a psychotherapist has been dedicated to person-centered work that focuses on the experience of being human. In recent years, his focus on existential challenges has been crucial to the multiple crises facing our planet as well as the increasing technologization of social and interpersonal life. Kirk's humanistic-existential and social justice orientation is needed now more than ever during our troubled times. It is also worth noting that we have not had an APA President who represents humanistic psychology since Maslow (53 years ago) and Frank Farley (27 years ago).

The most important thing that you can do is to vote and to encourage colleagues to vote. If you are an APA member, you should have received a ballot via email this morning. Here are some additional resources and actions that you can take:

- Kirk's Website: [www.kirkjschneider.com](http://www.kirkjschneider.com)
- Kirk's Facebook: [Kirk Schneider for APA President](https://www.facebook.com/KirkSchneiderforAPA)
- Kirk's Twitter: [@kirk\\_apa](https://twitter.com/kirk_apa)[http://twitter.com/kirk\\_apa](http://twitter.com/kirk_apa)
- Kirk's Instagram: [@kirk4prezapa](https://www.instagram.com/kirk4prezapa)
- Full platform video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1H-nkGvO-8>
- APA 2-minute talk is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=New1Jd3CsMw>
- Text of Kirk's Presidential Campaign Message:

One's platform is shaped by how one lives; not just by what one says. Here, then, is a brief description of how I've lived, which in turn informs my platform.

I grew up in a very psychologically-minded household, where my mother placed herself in psychoanalysis after the shattering death of my seven-year-old brother when I was two. My father was a humanistic educator, immersed in the writings of such fellow psychologists as Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Rollo May. This background was extremely important for me because, along with growing up as a secular Jew in a working-class Christian neighborhood, it set the tone for key challenges I have grappled with my entire life.

Undoubtedly, my foremost challenge was facing the swarm of anxiety that surrounded my brother's death. A second—and related—challenge was the psychoanalysis my parents had the foresight to arrange for me when I was about five years old. The third major challenge was dealing with my ethnicity in a homogenous ethnic enclave. While I was mostly OK with this enclave, I also experienced painful periods of estrangement and devaluation.

On the whole, however, and through much inner grappling, I learned a great deal from my early life predicaments. Primarily, I learned to be fascinated with—as well as profoundly humbled by—the big questions of life: how am I to live in the face of death, why do we treat each other as we do, and how do we make the best of our time on earth? These questions led to my pursuit of psychological knowledge from the start of college, and over the years this inquiry led me to mentors who were some of the most accomplished figures in our field. For example, I had the great privilege to study intensively with and become an intern for James F.T Bugental, one of the major pioneers of existential-humanistic psychology. I also had the privilege of studying under and eventually becoming a co-author with the avowed founder of existential-humanistic psychology in America, Rollo May. Finally, I was a work-study student for Stanley Krippner, one of the world's leading authorities on whole-person healthcare, indigenous healing practices, and international psychology. I am deeply grateful for these mentors and the remarkable life path that I have traveled. I would like such opportunities offered to many more people.

This, then, is the personal context that I bring to the critical issues facing psychology today—and the role that psychology can and should play in addressing today's existential threats.

I will be a transformational leader of U.S. psychology at a time when transformational leadership is both urgent and necessary. My overarching goal is to shift psychology from a secondary to a national and international priority by:

1. Addressing “emotionally impoverished relationships” across political, racial, and class divides. Due to COVID restrictions, racial and economic disenfranchisement, technology, and other factors, this is our country's number one psychosocial crisis in my view, and every one of my platforms pertains to it. In all frankness, I believe we need the equivalent of a Works Progress Administration-style approach to this problem, and I would call for that.
2. Mobilizing psychologists to facilitate healing dialogues to address the alarming political and racial divides in our country and within our profession. See my book *The Depolarizing of America* and demonstrations of a healing dialogue format I developed and continue to facilitate called the *Experiential Democracy Dialogue*. Applications of this format to divides within our society and profession are available on my website ([www.kirkjschneider.com](http://www.kirkjschneider.com)).

3. Developing a Relational Equity Task Force to further the work of APA's current Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Framework, but with an emphasis on optimizing in-depth, emotionally-reparative mental healthcare and organizational functioning—particularly in underserved areas. This includes an APA-sponsored extension of waivers nationwide for cross-state telehealth service until the PSYPACT legislation is complete. Right now, interjurisdictional practice is limited to the 27 states that have enacted the PSYPACT agreement, leaving 23 states, including New York and California, barred from providing services across state lines. One of the chief problems in our country is the inequitable provision of longer-term, relationally-centered facilitators to address the appalling deprivation of such opportunities in the culture at large, and we are paying the price for this deprivation with crushing rates of depression, isolation, anxiety, addiction, and crime. The elaboration of medical, vocational, legal, and other off-sets would also be key to this Task Force's inquiry.
4. Calling for a summit of leaders in all our specialties to investigate how we can holistically address the many psychosocial crises of our time. These include violence, racism, healthcare, political extremism, climate change, educational inequities, and domestic abuse, just to name a few—and the need to communicate our findings to media, the public, and the government.
5. Calling for a Presidential Task Force to investigate the merit of urging the U.S. Congress to create an Office of Psychological Consultant(s) to the U.S. This office would be comprised of distinguished experts in psychosocial approaches to mental healthcare and organizational functioning, and would augment the excellent work of our current APA advocacy efforts by:
  - promoting innovative national programs, such as the healing dialogues movement and in-depth therapy in underserved communities;
  - being available 24/7 from within government to advise leaders from the executive branch to Congress to the U.S. public on the present crises we face;
  - and utilizing the large presence of a government office to boost our media presence and public voice.

To sum, I believe emotionally-impoverished relationships are America's major psychosocial crisis, and that psychology should take the lead in addressing that crisis. Every one of my platforms—healing dialogues, relational equity, APA's holistic application of its specialties, and a federal office of psychological consultants—is aimed at remedying emotionally-impoverished relationships. And to the extent we remedy these relationships, we revitalize life.

For more information on my 2021 campaign and background, please visit:

<https://kirkjschneider.com>

and the APA President-Elect Candidacy portal:

<https://www.apa.org/about/governance/elections/president-elect-candidate-schneider>

In solidarity,  
Sarah

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