Disadvantages of eCoaching

eCoaching contains a lot of advantages with helping patients, but there are also some disadvantages we should consider.

1People feel less connected to an avatar or robot than a human and will feel less emotional letting down an avatar. A disadvantage that follows from this is reduced commitment. It is easier to abandon a task an avatar assigned than one assigned by the therapist. They feel there will be less consequences and will sooner disengage from eCoaches.

A long with the commitment issue, eCoaches are also harder to use for some people. Not everyone is familiar with using computers and might not be able to use the eCoach fully as they were intended to use. It is possible they cannot get the program to work or do not know how to work with the program. Interacting with an avatar can feel unnatural to some people as well. These problems may ensure that the therapy is not working optimally or at all and will slow down the progress to get over their social phobia.

eCoaches are not as good as people, yet. The avatars might end up in a situation they cannot handle and can provide strange answers, which have nothing to do with the conversation and can confuse the patient by doing so.

A simulated world with avatars will also be less realistic than the real world. Patients trained solely in the simulated world might be adapted to the avatars and are still not able to handle certain situations in the real world. They can also still get scared from actual person instead of avatars, because they feel it more real and are still not comfortable with handling with actual persons.

1. David Clutterbuck & Zulfi Hussain. 2010. *Virtual Coach, Virtual Mentor*