WHAT TO AVOID IN YOUR GRADUATE DRAMA THERAPY APPLICATION  
(with thanks and a tip of the hat to Drew C. and Karen M. Appleby, 2006)

Essay of Intent:  
• Avoid revealing excessive personal information about yourself that crosses professional boundaries.  
  o We are looking for people who already have an understanding of clear and appropriate boundaries!  
• Avoid making excessively altruistic statements.  
  o We know you want to help others or you wouldn’t be interested becoming a drama therapist.  
  o If you do have an interest in working with a particular population(s), type of institution(s), or drama therapy method(s), please include this and your reasons why you have that (those) interest(s).  
  o If you don’t know yet (which is perfectly permissible), write about your strengths and weaknesses and explore how they might lead you in a particular direction as you will be doing a variety of practicum and internships in graduate school.  
• Avoid inappropriate humor or attempts to appear cute or clever.  
• Avoid statements that show you haven’t done any research on this program OR drama therapy in general.  
  o We want people who have made a commitment to the field and to studying at the graduate level.  
• How is this program a perfect fit for you? Support your claim with specific evidence.  
• Avoid insincere flattery and hyperbole.  
• Avoid any type of spelling or grammatical errors!  
  o Demonstrate your attention to detail!  
  o Have at least 2 other people proof-read your essay for you after you have proof-read it several times yourself!  
• Avoid writing in a vague or disorganized manner or make unsupported statements.  
  o This will show that you are capable of Masters level writing.  
• What are your strengths and weaknesses at this time?  
• What resources do you have to succeed in graduate school? How will you handle the responsibility and pressure?  

Letters of Recommendation:  
• Choose your recommendation letters writers carefully!  
• Ask former professors who know you well or employers who have seen you work with others in a theatrical or a helping arena.  
  o No letters from family members or significant others.  
  o No letters from people who do not know you well.
• Ask your references to use their professional letterhead with address, phone number, and email clearly indicated in case we want to call them for more information.
• Ask your reference to talk about your strengths and weaknesses.
• Ask your writers to include their assessment and specific examples of your abilities to:
  o Succeed academically at the graduate level,
  o Present yourself well verbally and in writing,
  o Work well with others on a team,
  o Take initiative, work independently and be a self-starter
  o Respect co-workers and other peers,
  o Succeed in one or more areas of drama/theatre,
  o Demonstrate clear personal boundaries,
  o Possess potential aptitude for and commitment to a career in drama therapy
    ▪ (but only if your letter writer knows about therapy, in general, or drama therapy, in particular).
• When your reference talks about you, have him/her rate your abilities, using a specific comparison group in relation to you and your qualities.
  o For instance, instead of saying, “Billie Joe was one of the best students I ever had.”
  o Say, “In the 800 students I have taught in Creative Drama over the past ten years, Billie Joe ranks in the top 10%.”