

Relational Interventions

Treating Borderline, Bipolar, Schizophrenic, Psychotic, and Characterological Personality Organizations

Instructor: Lawrence Hedges

Course Description:

Working with high risk clients doesn't have to be a gut-wrenching experience. Many clinicians dread working with individuals diagnosed as borderline, bipolar, schizophrenic, psychotic, and character disordered. Often labeled as "high risk" or "difficult to treat", these relational disorders and interpersonal manifestations require long and intense transformative therapy. Planning effective support for these clients is often time-constrained, due to limited insurance, lack of community resources, and other limited support.

Attend this one-day seminar and learn how to plan effective support (even under tight time constraints) for these high risk clients. Participants will address the nature of personality organization in order to flow with – and eventually to enjoy – working at early developmental levels. This course will cover the client's engagement/disengagement needs, using a relational process-oriented approach, so the therapist can gauge how much and what kind of therapy can be achieved at any point in time. Attendees will also learn how to construct a treatment setting that reduces various pitfalls, such as transference-based false accusations against the therapist.

Learning Goals:

1. Identify high risk situations in psychotherapy and determine how to work through them as safely as possible
2. Establish a process to work developmentally with borderline, bipolar, and psychotic states
3. Identify the reasons behind resistance and how to confront these resistances
4. Determine when and how to focus on the borderline or symbiotic scenario as it is playing out in the psychotherapy encounter
5. Specify the nature of the psychotic transference that can lead to false accusations against the therapist and how to work with that transference to avoid false accusations

Course Outline:

RELATIONAL LISTENING - DIAGNOSTIC CONSIDERATIONS

1. Three levels of personality functioning:

- normal/neurotic
 - borderline/characterological
 - organizing/psychotic
2. Function of the symbiosis
 3. “Clinical chatter” or “clamor” and listening for styles of engagement and disengagement

PSYCHOTHERAPY AS RELATIONSHIP

1. Neuroscience and the human relational species
2. APA division 29 psychotherapy task force
3. The relational dimension in Satir, Wolpe, Lowen, and Beck

HISTORY OF THE PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

1. Freud’s “talking cure”
2. Expanded consciousness of ourselves and the ways we relate to others
3. Listening perspectives on the ways each person experiences the world, themselves, and their relationships

DEVELOPMENTAL-RELATIONAL LISTENING PERSPECTIVES

1. Organizing experience
 - fear of being alone
 - fear of making connections
2. Symbiotic experience
 - fear of abandonment
 - fear of self-assertion
3. Self-other experience
 - fear of being unacceptable
4. The independent experience
 - fear of failure and success
 - fear of being fully alive

CONTACTING EARLY RELATIONAL MODES

1. Replication of symbiotic relational engagements when treating borderline and character personality organizations
2. Intervention in disengagements when treating bipolar, mood, schizophrenic, and other psychotic organizations

FIGHT-FLIGHT-FREEZE AND DISCONNECTING MODES

1. Three scenarios of fight-flight-freeze and pre-defenses
2. Defining “the clamor”
3. An incessant cry or demand for more
4. A cry so intense and intrusive as to be contact-rupturing
5. An angry memory of what I needed and didn't get

WORKING THROUGH

1. Organizing transference and resistance and optimal responsiveness
2. A thought experiment in the organizing experience

3. Why do we resist loving contact?
4. Metaphor of an energy arc and where the contact is ruptured
5. Contrasting the fear of abandonment with the terror of connecting

THE COUNTERTRANSFERENCE EXPERIENCE

1. Organizing level: confusion when connections are avoided or ruptured
2. Symbiotic level: unusual responses to projected/role-reversal scenarios
3. “Selfother” level: boredom and/or irritation when narcissistic needs are thwarted
4. Triangular relatedness: intrusive sexual/aggressive reactions threaten/interfere with client’s material development

COUNTERTRANSFERENCE TO THE ORGANIZING EXPERIENCE

1. Denial of human potential
2. Fear of primitive energy
3. Encountering our own organizing experiences
4. Empathy leading to breaks in contact: Case Study

BORDERLINE PERSONALITY ORGANIZATION

A thought experiment

OTHER CASE STUDIES

1. Paul: a Case Study in working the organizing transference and countertransference
2. Case Studies on the borderline experience: Conrad, Carolyn, Gayle, Jolyn, and Sally
Concluding group discussion