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The Academy of Clinical and Applied Psychoanalysis

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INTERVENTION STRATEGIES TO INCREASE COMMUNICATION

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Receptive Listening-Probably the most important intervention for all therapists is receptive listening, which involves following the lead of the client as the therapist opens him or herself to the messages, both conscious and unconscious of the client. To believe that silence is an intervention is an advanced view of any therapist in training.

Object Oriented Questions- Because talking directly about ourselves is emotionally challenging, it is recommended that object-oriented questions be used. Object-oriented questions ask questions about the external world of things rather than about the internal world of thoughts and feelings, as a way to protect the vulnerable from their own feelings. Another form of the object-oriented question is to ask about ourselves to decrease the tension and frustration from the person with whom we are interacting. Object-oriented questions redirect aggressive tension from inside the person towards us or the external environment, rather than through an attack on the self. Use of the object-oriented question decreases symptoms, and in turn, acting out behaviors.

Example: Client: Everyone is always out to get me, to use me. Therapist: How do they do that? Any specific examples?

Following the Contact Function- Because people tend to withdraw from relationships ironically as a way to protect the relationship when frustration is involved, it is important to study the rhythm and timing of talking. Some people seek many contacts while others operate with longer breaks in between talking. While following the contact, one finds a rhythm of communication based on timing or a cue such as a question asked by the client that gives a signal to the amount of talking that someone needs. Following the contact function stops the other person from becoming over stimulated—a buildup of excessive aggressive impulse that can cause diverse problems. Consideration of simulation levels assists the patient to continue a smooth, spontaneous pattern of communication.

Example: Client: I told you everything that I have to say about that critical teacher. It’s not fair that I’m singled out for having my own opinions. Now, what are you going to do about it? Therapist: I need to understand it more. What is it about the teacher that gets such a strong reaction? Client: She doesn’t like me...(talk just enough to keep the other person talking and to understand the communications. This slows down impulses, regulates feelings and creates a atmosphere for possible problem solving).

Consulting- Asking the patient for his or her thoughts about the kind of talking that is needed in the sessions can result in the client’s expansion of his or her own internal resources and can help the therapist in creating an intervention that will be effective. The client is empowered through consultation, resulting in an increase in ability to function every day.

Example: Client: I don’t want to be discharged to a nursing home. I’ll just refuse to leave if I’m sent there. Therapist: Where should you be living when you leave here? Client: I want to live with my children. I belong at home. Therapist: What would have to occur to have that happen for you?

Emotional Insulation- Insulation is like a soft, protective cocoon which can often help us feel less vulnerable to stressors and to resist resorting to a passive aggressive stance, defiance, outbursts or violence. Unmanageable environmental stressors or internal conflict can require some distancing from the feelings for all of us. Vulnerable individuals have less ability to filter stimulation than healthy individuals. Modern psychoanalysts use techniques such as object-oriented questions and consulting to build emotional insulation in others.

Example: Client: Why didn’t you call me back? I left you a message and didn’t hear from you. Therapist: I should have called you. You are the top of my agenda right now. If I would have called back, what would I have heard? (the therapist moves the aggressive aim from the client to the therapist herself)
Joining- Therapists are often faced with difficult of statements that seem impossible to respond to with the appropriate intervention, leaving the therapist feeling hopeless, powerless and frustrated. Joining the feeling by making a statement that demonstrates an understanding of the experience can be powerful position. Joining the feeling does not mean that the therapist agrees with thoughts or actions, but allows for empathy and recognition of the difficulties. The experience of being understood emotionally cannot be underestimated as an important regulator of internal tension and its influence on behavior is significant.

Example: Client: I know that he was in my room. I can see because everything is moved around. Look at the picture frame! It used to face the right and now it is facing the left. I'm sure that he was going over all of my things and probably even in my drawer.
Therapist: It's very disturbing.

Mirroring- People seem to experience comfort when being with those perceived as similar to themselves. Sometimes this is a mirror image, like a similar dress, posture or a repetition of exactly the same words used by the client that can increase comfort and equilibrium. Mirroring is a form of verbally or non-verbally communicated empathy.

Example: Client: I don't know if I want to talk with you anymore!
Therapist: I'm not sure that I should be talking with you right now either

REFERENCES FOR HANDOUTS


