Countertransference Counts

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Abstract

The purpose of this talk is to explore how counter-transference can impact and transform the work with clients and their eating disorder recovery. Having worked with clients at all levels of care, including inpatient, residential, partial hospitalization programs (php), intensive outpatient psychotherapy (Iop) & private practice settings I have become passionate about how countertransference can transform the therapeutic work.

Beginning with an exploration of the definitions of countertransference including reactive, defensive and induced responses. Addressing why countertransference is important to be aware (and stay aware) of due to how it can change the professional relationship with the client. Also, exploring how one responds to one's own countertransference impacts the therapy work and can be a transforming process that takes courage and self-awareness to navigate.

Specific and relevant clinical research used for this talk backs up the learning objectives about the importance and impact of countertransference.

The practical application includes a simple three step approach to one's countertransference including 'Awareness, Attending & Action' within eating disorder recovery work.

Understanding what eating disorder themes may be triggering for a clinician, aside from whether one has ever struggled with an eating disorder or not. These universal themes can include body image challenges, orthorexia and the client's relationship to food & body image in the context of the family of origin & childhood.

Working with 'difficult' clients will be addressed in the context of how a clinician can process different ways of handling their countertransference & what / how they communicate to the client. Specifically, working with clients with personality disorders, dual diagnosis, phobias and Pica.

Keywords: Countertransference, Eating Disorder Recovery, Body image