

The Therapeutic Relationship in ABA Caregiver Support

Parenting with ABA Members CE Event

August 23, 2023

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What is a therapeutic relationship?

The therapeutic relationship refers to the feelings and attitudes that therapist and client have toward one another, and the manner in which these are expressed.

Wilmots, Midgley, Thackeray, Reynolds, & Loades, (2020)

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What is a therapeutic alliance?

"a cooperative working relationship between client and therapist, considered by many to be an essential aspect of successful therapy. Derived from the concept of the psychoanalytic working alliance, the therapeutic alliance comprises bonds, goals, and tasks. Bonds are constituted by the core conditions of therapy, the client's attitude toward the therapist, and the therapist's style of relating to the client; goals are the mutually negotiated, understood, agreed upon, and regularly reviewed aims of the therapy; and tasks are the activities carried out by both client and therapist.

-American Psychology Association

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The therapist becomes an SD for what?

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Obstacles to a strong therapeutic relationship:



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What do you bring to the working partnership?

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What do caregivers bring to the working partnership?

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Safety cues

Safety- free of impending harm while behaving in a context with minimal aversive stimulation, as indicated by no or minimal engagement in avoidance or escape of that context

-Rajaraman et al, 2022

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Task agreement

simply agreeing on what the "work" of psychotherapy is

Bond

the warm and empathic relationship developing between a client and therapist

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How to develop task agreement & bond

1. Be authentic
2. Model exploration
3. Share your own values
4. Share your own vulnerabilities

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How to develop bond:

- Listen for the context- what is going on?
- Listen for the function- how is it working?

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Task agreement

- Revisit regularly
- What are we here to do?
- What is your role? What are you there to do?
- It's a process, not a checklist to go over at intake.

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Task agreement sentence starters

- I heard you say....
- How about we work on.....
- We could try this together....
- Would you be willing to....

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Two mountains metaphor

"It's like you're in the process of climbing up a big mountain that has lots of dangerous places on it. My job is to watch out for you and shout out directions if I can see places you might slip or hurt yourself. But I'm not able to do this because I'm standing at the top of your mountain, looking down at you. If I'm able to help you climb your mountain, it's because I'm on my own mountain, just across a valley. I don't have to know anything about exactly what it feels like to climb your mountain to see where you are about to step, and what might be a better path for you to take."

Quoted from Twohig, M. (2004). ACT for OCD: Abbreviated Treatment Manual

Resources (with hyperlinks when possible)

Follette, W. C., Naugle, A. E., & Callaghan, G. M. (1996). [A radical behavioral understanding of the therapeutic relationship in effecting change.](#) Behavior therapy, 27(4), 623-641.

Rajaraman, A., Austin, J. L., Gover, H. C., Cammilleri, A. P., Donnelly, D. R., & Hanley, G. P. (2022). [Toward trauma-informed applications of behavior analysis.](#) Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 55(1), 40-61.

Rogers, C. R. (1995). [A way of being.](#) Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Taylor, B. A., LeBlanc, L. A., & Nosik, M. R. (2019). [Compassionate care in behavior analytic treatment: Can outcomes be enhanced by attending to relationships with caregivers?.](#) Behavior Analysis in Practice, 12(3), 654-666.

Whittingham, K., & Coyne, L. (2019). [Acceptance and commitment therapy: The clinician's guide for supporting parents.](#) Academic Press.

Wilmots, E., Midgley, N., Thackeray, L., Reynolds, S., & Loades, M. (2020). [The therapeutic relationship in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy with depressed adolescents: A qualitative study of good-outcome cases.](#) Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice, 93(2), 276-291.

Is this a good fit for your family?

Time

- I feel this is doable in the time I have.
- I need help finding the time.
- There's no way I can find time for this.

Comfort/ Confidence

- I understand the plan and feel good trying it on my own.
- The training was a little unclear. I'm not sure what to do.
- That made no sense to me. We need something else.

Troubleshooting

- I feel good applying this to new things that may pop up.
- I can try to use these behavior tools on my own.
- Not going to work for new issues that may come up.

Whole Family

- This feels too hard on my child.
- This feels too hard on the rest of my family.
- This feels too hard on me.

Is it worth it?

- The effort is totally worth it.
- The payoff of improvement in my family seems really far off.
- The effort does not seem like it's going to get us anywhere.

Community

- The people in our world will be understanding of this.
- No one will understand and I'll feel uncomfortable.

From Table 3 in Taylor, LeBlanc, & Nosik, (2019).

The Behavior Analyst:

- regularly asks how I am doing
- acknowledges his or her mistakes
- cares about including all of my children
- reassures me that things will get better
- acknowledges when treatment is not working
- seems to have an understanding of what it is like for me to have a child with autism
- understands when I have challenges implementing protocols
- seems to understand my fears and anxiety about my child's future
- is patient with me when training me to implement protocols
- understands what I struggle with in parenting my child
- understands how having a child with autism impacts our family dynamics
- acknowledges my feelings when discussing difficult or challenging circumstances
- respects my cultural values and beliefs
- is compassionate and nonjudgmental



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CARE Checklist

Adapted from the CARE Measure, Stewart W Mercer 2004

<i>How was the behavior analyst at....</i>	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Does not apply
1 .Making you feel at ease..... (being friendly and warm towards you, treating you with respect, not cold, or abrupt)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Letting you tell your "story" (giving you time to fully describe things in your own words; not interrupting or diverting you)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Really listening..... (paying close attention to what you were saying; not looking at their notes or computer while you were talking)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Being interested in you as a whole person..... (asking/ knowing relevant details about your life and your situation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Fully understanding your concerns..... (communicating that they actually understood your concerns; not overlooking or dismissing anything)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Showing care and compassion..... (seeming genuinely concerned; connecting with you on a human level)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Being positive..... (having a positive approach and attitude; being honest but not negative about any problems)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Explaining things clearly..... (fully answering your questions; giving adequate information; not being vague)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Helping you to take control..... (encouraging rather than lecturing you)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Making a plan of action with you.... (discussing options; including your views)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

