

Course: Difficult Patients/Difficult Dyads
Instructor: Jennifer L. Stevens, Ph.D., ABPP

This condensed course will address the challenges that work with patients recognized as “difficult” pose for therapists. Course material will address not only patient pathology, but also the ways in which patient and therapist can become entangled in unproductive forms of engagement together. A review of the dynamics and phenomenology of narcissistic character structure, borderline organization, and forms of developmental deficit or obstruction will both frame and be woven through the various topics covered in the seminar, as they seem necessary to any discussion of difficult treatment situations.

Over the course of the five weeks, particular clinical difficulties and patient populations will be addressed, e.g. patients who are regressed or hateful, suicidal, substance abusing or difficult to reach, all of whom present strong countertransference reactions and vulnerabilities for enactment (often with a sado-masochistic substrate). Additionally, the course material will address unproductive therapeutic processes, such as impasse and those therapeutic developments also known as negative therapeutic reactions. Though these clinical phenomena are sometimes dramatic, readings and discussion will also concentrate on the ways in which therapeutic dyads can become entangled in unproductive, yet deeply entrenched and mutually contributed-to knots bringing lively work, development and change to a slow and grinding halt.

In an effort to bring the reading material alive, discussion of examples from candidates’ and the instructor’s clinical work will be centrally important and is strongly encouraged.

Week 1 (Saturday 1:00 – 3:30)

March 9, 2019 Introduction and Background

Bach, Sheldon. (1998). *On Treating the Difficult Patient*, in *The Modern Freudians; Contemporary Psychoanalytic Technique*, Eds. Ellman, Grand, Sivan & Elleman. Jason Aronson Inc.: New Jersey, pp.185 – 195

Winnicott, Donald W. (1945). Primitive Emotional Development, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 26: 137 – 143

Fromm, M. G. (1995). What Does Borderline Mean? *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 12(2): pp. 233 – 245

Additional Reading (elective)

Bick, E. (1968). The Experience of Skin in Early Object-Relations, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 49:484 – 486

Week 2 (Saturday 1:00 – 3:30)

March 23, 2019 Technical Concerns/Level of Development and Pathology and Difficult to Reach Patients

Alvarez, A. (2012). Chapter I, *Levels of therapeutic work and levels of pathology*, in *The Thinking Heart*. Routledge, NY, pp. 7 – 25.

Bach, S., Grossmark, C. & Kandall, E. (2014). The Empty Self and the Perils of Attachment. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 101 (3), pp. 321 – 340

Joseph, B. (1989). *The patient who is difficult to reach*, In *Psychic Equilibrium and Psychic Change*, Edited by M. Feldman and E. Bott Spillius, *New Library of Psychoanalysis*, 9:1 – 222/ London and New York: Tavistock and Routledge, pp 75-87

Additional Reading (elective)

Balint, Michael. (1979). Chapters Three and Four, *The two levels of analytic work & The area of the basic fault*, in *The Basic Fault: Therapeutic Aspects of Regression*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston, IL, pp. 11-23

Coltart, N. (1991). The Silent Patient. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 1(4) 439 – 453

Foehl, J.C. (2011). A Phenomenology of Distance: On Being Hard to Reach. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 21(5): 607 – 618

Week 3 (Saturday 1:00 – 3:30)

March 30, 2019 Dependency and Destructiveness/Hatred

Modell, A. H. (1975). A Narcissistic Defense Against Affects and the Illusion of Self-Sufficiency. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 56:275-282

Coen, S. (1992). Chapter 2, *What is pathological dependency?*, in *The Misuse of Persons; Analyzing pathological dependency*. The Analytic Press: NJ, pp. 13 – 34

Epstein, L. (1984). An Interpersonal-Object Relations Perspective on Working with Destructive Aggression. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 20:651 – 662

Slochower, J. (2014). *Holding Ruthlessness and Hate*, in *Holding and Psychoanalysis: A Relational Perspective*, second edition. Routledge: NY, pp 58-74

Additional Reading (elective)

Gabbard, G. O. (1989). Patients Who Hate, *Psychiatry*, vol. 52, February, pp 96 – 106

Epstein, L. (77). The Therapeutic Function of Hate in the Countertransference. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 13, 442 – 460

Week 4 (Tuesday 5:00 – 7:15)

April 30, 2019

Going Nowhere: Compliance/Pseudo-analysis & Impasse/Negative Therapeutic Reaction

Reinsenberg-Malcolm, R. (1990). As-if: The Phenomenon of Not Learning. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 71:385 – 392

Feldman, M. (1999). The Defensive Uses of Compliance. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 19(1):22 – 39

Additional Reading (elective)

Reinsenberg-Malcolm, R. (1981). Technical Problems in the Analysis of a Pseudo-compliant Patient. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 62:477 – 484.

Fromm, M. G. (2012). *Impasse and transitional relatedness*, in *Taking the Transference, Reaching Toward Dreams*. Karnac: London, pp. 1-19

Hirsch, M. (2013). *Negative Therapeutic Reaction in Light of Object Relations Theory*, in *Nothing Good is Allowed to Stand: An Integrative View of the Negative Therapeutic Reaction*. Routledge: New York, pp. 97-107.

Additional Reading (elective)

Riviere, J. (1936). A Contribution to the Analysis of the Negative Therapeutic Reaction. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 17;301-320

Feldman, Michael. (2009). *Envy and the Negative Therapeutic Reaction*, in *Doubt, Conviction and the Analytic Process*. Routledge: New York, pp 118-137

Segal, H. (1993). On the Clinical Usefulness of the Concept of Death Instinct. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 74:55 - 61

Week 5 (Tuesday 5:00 – 7:15)

May 14, 2019

Suicidal and Substance Abusing Patients

Plakun, E.M. (2011). Chapter 11, *An alliance based intervention for suicide*, in *Treatment Resistance and Patient Authority: The Austen Riggs Reader*, ed. Plakun, E., M. Norton, pp 539-560

Maltzberger, T. & Buie, D. (1973). *Countertransference Hate in the Treatment of Suicidal Patients*, in *Essential Papers on Suicide*, Maltzberger and Goldblatt, eds. pp. 269-289

Directors, L. (2005). Encounters with Omnipotence in the Psychoanalysis of Substance Users. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 15:567-586

Additional Reading (elective)

Adler, G. (1999). *The alliance and the more disturbed patient*, In *The Therapeutic Alliance*. Classic Books, pp 75 – 91.