

UNC-CH School of Social Work
Clinical Lecture Series
presents

**Responding to Client Therapy-
Interfering Behaviors Using
Behavioral Principles and
Techniques**

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Therapy-Interfering Behavior (TIB)

- It is exactly what it sounds like!
 - Behaviors that interfere with effective therapy
 - Can be done by clients and therapists
- What are types and examples of client TIB?

Therapy-Interfering Behavior (TIB)

- Client behaviors that interfere with receiving therapy:
 - Coming late, missing sessions, or last minute cancellations
 - Not doing homework in between sessions
 - Not participating in session (e.g., not talking, daydreaming, dissociating, lying, saying “I don’t know” a lot)

Therapy-Interfering Behavior (TIB)

- Client behaviors that burn out therapists:
 - Not engaging or accepting treatment strategies therapist believes are essential
 - Phoning or emailing therapist too much
 - Demanding solutions / assistance / resources therapist cannot offer
 - Being disrespectful / hostile / critical towards therapist and therapy
 - Not paying for services in a timely manner

Common Therapist Responses to Client TIB

- Can have a range of emotional and cognitive responses
- And therefore may...
 - Ignore client TIB
 - Respond assertively to client TIB
 - Respond aggressively to client TIB

Therapist Challenges for Responding to Client TIB

- Therapist does not recognize client TIB is occurring
- Therapist is unclear how to understand / conceptualize client TIB

Therapist Challenges for Responding to Client TIB

- Therapist is unsure how to respond therapeutically to client TIB
- Therapist is concerned, worried how to respond without hurting client or harming therapeutic alliance

Recognizing Client TIB

- Important to ask yourself periodically
 - How is this work proceeding?
 - How motivated am I to continue this work?
 - What is the client doing / not doing that's increasing my motivation to work with them?
 - How do I feel when I anticipate seeing this client in session?
- Remember the role of therapist TIB!

Recognizing Client TIB

- You're feeling frustrated, annoyed, irritated, discouraged, hopeless, etc.
- Important to observe and describe TIB
 - Avoid judging or pathologizing client or yourself
 - Need clear and detailed understanding of TIB = benefit of behavioral analysis!

Conceptualizing Client TIB: Chain Analysis

- (1) Describe the specific problem behavior
- (2) Describe the prompting event
- (3) Describe in detail the links in the chain of events between the prompting event and the problem behavior
 - Include thoughts, emotions, sensations, actions by client or by others, events, etc.

Conceptualizing Client TIB: Chain Analysis

(4) Describe the consequences of the behavior

(5) Consider what heightens the client's vulnerability to the prompting event (e.g., client factors or environmental)

- May find that TIB is representative of client's broader difficulties!

Chain Analysis of Client Not Doing Homework

Prompting event: Liz is supposed to call a friend (Jane) to talk, get together, etc.

Links in the chain: Liz thinks "Jane doesn't want to talk to me or see me." → Liz feels sad, rejected → Liz does not call Jane → Liz thinks "I have no friends. I'm always going to be alone." → Liz feels hopeless, ashamed → Liz goes to bed for the rest of the day → comes to session feeling depressed and worthless

Chain Analysis of Client Arriving Late to Session

Prompting event: Mark receives a work-related phone call one hour before his therapy session

Links in the chain: Mark thinks "I can take this call. It will be quick." → Mark answers the call → Mark realizes 20 minutes have passed → Mark thinks "I can't interrupt my co-worker. That would be rude/unacceptable." → The call ends after 10 more minutes → Mark hurries to session arriving late and feeling anxious and ashamed

Addressing Client TIB

- Create / share conceptualization of TIB with client
- Brainstorm alternative strategies for key links in the behavioral chain
- Assist client in implementing new strategies (e.g., skills training, cognitive restructuring, etc.)
- Modify contingencies in therapy to reinforce skillful behavior, not TIB

Addressing Client TIB: Treatment Possibilities

- Client Liz's not doing her homework:
 - Cognitive restructuring / modification
 - Acting opposite to urges to avoid phone call, avoid getting into bed
 - Interpersonal skills training: making requests , building friendships, etc.
 - Building in rewards, incentives for doing homework

Addressing Client TIB: Treatment Possibilities

- Client Mark arriving late to session:
 - Time management training
 - Interpersonal skills training of making requests and setting limits
 - Building in rewards / incentives for arriving on time

Addressing Client TIB

- For less frequent or troubling client TIB, may work to simply discuss TIB with client – may be all that is needed!
- Discussing client TIB can feel awkward or uncomfortable for therapists; therapists may not know how to raise it
 - So, tend to avoid addressing it!

Addressing Client TIB: Using Interpersonal Skills

- Can feel more comfortable when have structure or skill to do something
- Remember your interpersonal skills training!
 - An example of interpersonal skills training is DEAR from Dialectical Behavior Therapy (Linehan, 1993b)

Addressing Client TIB: Using Interpersonal Skills

DEAR (Linehan, 1993b):

(D) Describe the current situation

(E) Express your thoughts and feelings in a non-judgmental manner

(A) Assert yourself (make your request)

(R) Reinforce the other person for meeting your request or respecting your limit

Addressing Client TIB: Using Interpersonal Skills

DEAR skill for client not paying on time:

(D) "I've noticed recently that you haven't been paying each week for our sessions."

(E) "It's important to me to collect payment each time we meet."

(A) "Let's please take care of our balance each week, beginning with our next meeting."

(R) "I really appreciate you respecting my payment policy. That means a great deal to me. Thank you."

Addressing Client TIB: Therapist Assumptions

- Even when have the skills to address TIB, therapists may be reluctant due to own beliefs and assumptions; ex.:
 - “Therapists are here for their clients and therefore their needs are less important.”
 - “It is wrong and/or inappropriate to express frustration or anger at a client.”
 - “Whether I raise this concern or not, it won’t make a difference.”

Addressing Client TIB: Therapist Assumptions

- Remember, therapy is an interpersonal process!
- Not addressing client TIB, particularly frequent and frustrating instances will likely negatively impact you, your client, and your ability to work together well

Addressing Client TIB: Take Away Message!

- Addressing TIB with your client in an open, collaborative, and caring manner
 - Can actually strengthen the therapy relationship
 - Can reduce TIB within the treatment and in client's life more broadly

For More Information on Client TIB and DBT

Linehan, M. M. (1993a). *Cognitive behavioral treatment of borderline personality disorder*. New York: Guildford Press.

Linehan, M. M. (1993b). *Skills training manual for treating borderline personality disorder*. New York: Guildford Press.

Pryor, K. (1999). *Don't shoot the dog: The new art of teaching and training*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Pub.