

**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?

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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)

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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

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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

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Therapist Challenges for Responding to Client TIB

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

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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

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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!

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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!

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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.

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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!

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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

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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

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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)
- Modify contingencies in therapy to reinforce skillful behavior, not TIB

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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

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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

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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!

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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)

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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

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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."

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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."

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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

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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

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For More Information on Client TIB and DBT

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

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

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

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