

Transference Focused Psychotherapy for Personality Disorders

William Alanson White Institute

Transference-Focused Psychotherapy (TFP) is a manualized psychoanalytic therapy for patients with personality disorders, including borderline and narcissistic personality disorders. Borderline Personality Disorder afflicts 2-6% of the population and is associated with a high risk of suicide. Those afflicted with the disorder are high utilizers of mental health services, often tertiary. This high-cost utilization reflects two issues, 1) the dearth of clinics and treaters offering evidence-based treatments and 2) the reliance on clinicians who well intended are commonly misinformed about the disorder and its treatment needs. Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is a disorder of high prevalence (estimated at 1-6% of general population and 17%-30% of outpatients) that often goes misdiagnosed and thereby untreated as anxiety, depression, sub-threshold bipolar disorder, substance abuse. The disorder has differing clinical presentations, some may be highly functional yet unable to achieve interpersonal closeness, while others may be disabled vocationally and interpersonally; many suffer from depressed mood, loneliness and suicidal tendencies are not uncommon. These patients are seen largely in outpatient settings and commonly present challenges for their therapists, particularly in developing a therapeutic alliance and working with the intense and difficult transference and countertransference feelings that develop.

Our goal with this course is to increase the knowledge of Transference Focused Psychotherapy, an evidence-based treatment for patients with BPD, and more recently applied to NPD, to help close the knowledge gap around patients with both disorders and their treatment needs, to increase competence and practice by training clinicians in the theory and application of TFP including modes of assessment and treatment; and ultimately, to make the delivery of TFP more available to patients with personality disorders.

To address the clinical needs of this patient population, TFP combines a psychodynamic approach with structure and limit-setting. The goals of the treatment are ambitious - personality change, as reflected in the patient's sense of self, functioning, and satisfaction in their interpersonal and work lives, as well as symptom change.

TFP is based on a contemporary object relations model of psychological functioning that incorporates findings from attachment and neurocognitive research. The treatment focuses on internalized representations of self and other that organize the patient's interpersonal experience. Exaggerated, distorted, and unrealistic internal representations of self and other that characterize those with severe personality disorders are associated with problems in self (identity, self-direction, self-esteem and affect regulation) and interpersonal functioning (intimacy and empathy). The treatment aims to modify these internalized relationship patterns by exploring them as they are activated in the here and now of the therapeutic relationship and in the patient's interpersonal life.

The course will also cover how we have adapted the tactics and techniques of TFP to meet the special clinical challenges posed by patients with pathological narcissism and NPD at different levels of functioning and with different presentations.

Faculty: Personality Disorders Institute
Weill Cornell Medical College

Otto Kernberg, M.D.
Barry Stern, Ph.D.
John Clarkin, Ph.D.
Diana Diamond, Ph.D.
Eve Caligor, M.D.
Frank Yeomans, M.D., Ph.D.

Time: Thursday 4:30 to 6:00 PM
From 2/24-4/14/2022

WEEK 1: 2/24/22:

INTRODUCTION: Overview and evolution of TFP (Otto Kernberg)

WEEK 2: 3/3/22:

Model of Pathology: Alternative Model of Personality Disorders (AMPD; Structural interviewing, sharing diagnosis and setting up goals (Barry Stern and John Clarkin)

WEEK 3: 3/10/22:

Contracting and maintaining the frame. Neutrality and deviating from neutrality (Frank Yeomans)

WEEK 4: 3/17/22:

Strategies of treatment, identifying an affectively dominant object relations and working with hierarchy of priorities. Working with transferences (Barry Stern)

WEEK 5: 3/24/22:

Techniques of treatment (process of interpretation, neutrality, counter-transference use—parallels and divergence from other models) (Diana Diamond)

WEEK 6: 3/31/22:

Object relations model of narcissistic pathology; assessment and clinical challenges. modifications of TFP for NPD and pathological Narcissism (PN). (Diana Diamond)

WEEK 7: 4/7/22:

Narcissism special topics (resistances; love relations; malignant narcissism) (Otto Kernberg and Diana Diamond)

WEEK 8: 4/14/22:

TFP- E (Eve Caligor)