Hitting the high points



We can meet our clients from authentic care and compassion while at the same time respecting our clients' agency and their own practice of self-care. Trusting that change happens with the right holding environment.

Find your 50/50. Slower is faster. Less is more. Sit back into your chair. Be open to being surprised, delighted and moved.

We are helping our clients show interest and curiosity to their inner worlds (perhaps for the first time). Being with vs. doing to.

Our complex trauma is going mix with our client's complex trauma. Self-inquiry: Our unconscious material can interfere with progress: Wanting to be liked or admired, stirring away from strong emotions, needing to be needed, pressure to "fix" our clients.

Be boldly relational. As you connect with your humanity, you can connect with your client's humanity. Showing and sharing genuine vulnerability can help deepen experience.

Hitting the high points



The client sets the intention for therapy. Once set, we start to explore what is emerging and unfolding in the here and now on ALL levels of experience! The contract is the organizing thread, our north star.

We reflect moments of agency and we reflect psychobiological shifts as they happen in real time to help build capacity. “You took time with your grief and here we are!” “I notice your shoulders drop.”

We do not focus on the traumatic events per se, but on the adaptations our clients have made (survival styles) and how they persist into adulthood (identity).

Bring things into the here and now, deconstruct and process: Give me a recent experience of feeling anxious about asking for what you need (open this for exploration moment by moment in real time).

Hitting the high points



Riding the wave of core affect to transformation in identity! In dyadic regulation, the client starts to process emotions that were stymied in childhood.

Slow down with this and give it space: Name the core emotion, where it is experienced in the body, what it is trying to communicate to the environment, metaprocess, explicit with accompaniment (undo aloneness).

Understanding survival styles (Connection, Attunement, Trust, Attunement and Love Sexuality) can be super helpful in informing our approach and interventions. Be loosely informed and open to be surprised. Remember the continuum from organized to survival style to pathological.

Favorite Defenses- Projecting, Blaming, judging, shutting down, etc.



Attachment- Inhibitory- Shame/Anxiety

The transformative power of moment by moment tracking!

Forms of Self-activation (contracts):

Core Affect
Healthy Dependency
Boundaries
Open Heartedness
Fulfillment/pleasure
Vulnerability
Connection (self/other)
Authentic expression

Melt/bypass defenses to help clients work through core dilemma: "I want it (authentic drive), but I fear it (drive to survive).

Self Activation/Life Force Expression

Understanding the role and hidden dimensions of shame and self-rejection: The Rejected Child Becomes the Rejecting Child

When the parent who is supposed to love and protect her child is the source of threat, an impossible dynamic is created.



As a way of adapting, the child internalizes rejection (distortion in identity). The child who is hated learns to hate himself. The child who is rejected learns to reject himself.

Rage (a normal response to abuse) is split off in an attempt to sustain attachment and survive. This rage needs to go somewhere and it often gets turned inward in the form of shame and self-rejection.

Shame has a survival function! It's easier to take the blame for the environmental failure then have to face that parents are inadequate and incapable of love: "I will take the bad in hopes of finding love and attachment." Psycho-ed our clients on this! It is a way of protecting the attachment relationship we depend upon.

Splitting or disconnecting is a way for children to cope with complex or threatening situations.

Often you will hear black and white thinking (a vestige from attachment wounding): If I feel, I will die; If I assert my needs, people will leave; If I depend on another, I will be betrayed; Open heart means broken heart; You're either the savior or the villain.

We are in the shame management business!

If an adult client knew as a child that he was a good person in a shitty situation, there would be little need for therapy.

Clients generally come into therapy for anxiety, depression or relational stress not consciously aware of the self-shaming lurking below.

The long arm of unresolved complex trauma lives in our distorted self-image: Self-Rejecting, objectifying, punishing, limiting, hating, etc.

By integrating the very thing our clients want out of therapy (connection, autonomy, fulfillment, loving/sexual feelings), our clients start to experience spaciousness, separation from their shame based identifications (the stuck). To catch it as it arises.

Understanding the role and hidden dimensions of shame and self-rejection: The Rejected Child Becomes the Rejecting Child

Shame and self-rejection can lurk at the base of each survival style.

- Connection: Feel rejected for and rejecting their existence.
- Attunement: Feel rejected for and rejecting their needs.
- Trust: Feel rejected for and rejecting their vulnerability or dependency need.
- Autonomy: Feel rejected for and rejecting their authentic self.
- Love/Sexuality: Feel rejected for and rejecting their sexuality or loving feelings.

Understanding the role and hidden dimensions of shame and self-rejection: The Rejected Child Becomes the Rejecting Child

- I often ask my clients how they see/treat themselves when faced with life's challenges and rejections.
- Child consciousness: "No one will ever love me. I feel hopeless. They don't like me because I am overweight."
- Adult consciousness: "I'm disappointed and sad he didn't call back, but I will keep trying."
- Shame dims our light and narrows our lives. Clients will spend a lot of time and effort to avoid rejection for fear of facing their own shame and self-rejection. Can we help our clients manage their feelings with hard experiences (it is a fickle world out there after all) without rejecting themselves?

Understanding the role and hidden dimensions of shame and self-rejection:
The Rejected Child Becomes the Rejecting Child

Some helpful tools when working with self-rejection and chipping away at shame:

1. “Wow! What a brilliant thing (strategy) you did to survive. You took all the bad in hopes of earning love.”
2. The therapist’s openness, curiosity and positive regard.
3. What’s the scariest thing about setting a boundary, asking for what you need, depending on others.
4. Self-compassion- Tend to yourself first when hurt. Know that you are worthy of care.
5. Moment by moment tracking: When client is blaming another or pressuring herself, it’s likely she has hit on something she hates in herself. Catch in real time and process (triangle).

Understanding the role and hidden dimensions of shame and self-rejection: The Rejected Child Becomes the Rejecting Child

Some helpful tools when working with self-rejection and chipping away at shame:

1. Share how you feel about how aggressive they can be with themselves: “Oh my gosh, those are really harsh words you are using about yourself.”
2. Self-acceptance: “When I can accept myself as I am (in this moment), I can start to change. I’m a work in progress. All my parts are welcome including my exiled and shadowed parts (the good, bad and ugly).”
3. Ride the wave of core affect (healthy aggression). Anger is often associated with the abuser. Can our clients start to connect with their own experience of anger which is in there? Instead of turning it in, it is turned out (portrayal).
4. Reclaiming personal agency is an antidote to shame: Recognizing that we are active participants in how we shape our lives and how we treat ourselves. Change shame from a noun to a verb: “I am shameful” vs. “I am shaming myself.”