

THE BOSTON PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY AND INSTITUTE, INC.

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**Models of Therapeutic Action
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This course we will explore the question of how psychotherapy helps people change. It is not obvious why sitting and talking to another person should be helpful in symptom relief or character transformation. Although psychoanalysis has always emphasized the role of insight in change, it became clear to Freud and his followers that insight alone often did not lead to change. What else is necessary? In recent decades, theories about therapeutic action have centered on the importance of insight versus therapeutic relationship factors. More recently, the therapeutic influence of the treatment relationship has gained increasing specificity, clarity and importance. Different theoreticians have proposed different ideas, and we will look at a few. As we read these articles together, we hope that you will try to think about the following questions: What does this author think is helpful to patients? Is this one of the ways that I think I have helped my patients? Can I use this author's ideas in my clinical work? Does this article bring to mind any clinical vignettes which either confirm or refute its arguments?

For our first class session, please bring your own vignettes or thoughts about your experiences of movement, or moments of change, in psychotherapy.

Session I: March 24, History and Fundamental Tensions: Relationship vs Insight, Experience vs Interpretation, and Evolving Theory

In this session, we will discuss the first person, retrospective account of an analyst's experience in two very different personal psychoanalyses - with two well-known British Object Relations Theorists, Fairbairn and Winnicott. This account brings into focus many of the themes and questions we will be exploring throughout this course: what are the respective roles of insight versus the therapeutic "relationship;" what makes for an effective and alive interpretation; what is the impact of the therapist's life and character; what is the role of mourning in the therapeutic process?

Guntrip, H. (1975). My Experience of Analysis with Fairbairn and Winnicott. *International Review of Psychoanalysis* 2: 145-156 [PEP Web Link](#)

Session II: March 31, The Nature of Therapeutic Action

In this session, we will discuss two classic articles that consider the essential elements of therapeutic action. “Remembering, Repeating and Working Through” is considered one of Freud’s best known “technique” papers. In it, he lays out his ideas about the importance of the patient’s communications through remembering and repeating in the transference, as well as ideas about the complex issue of resistance. The Strachey paper is a dense, but classic theoretical work which takes up Freud’s original ideas and elaborates on the role of resistance, considers the analyst’s function as a new good object who can alleviate the patient’s self-criticism, and attempts to define what makes for an effective interpretation that will lead to insight and change.

Freud, S. (1914). Remembering Repeating and Working Through. SE 12, pages 147-165. [PEP Web Link](#).

Strachey, J. (1969 reprint of 1934 article). The Nature of the Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalysis. Int J. Psychoanalysis. 50:275-292. [PEP Web Link](#)

Session III: April 7, Therapist as New Good Object

In this session, we will discuss articles that will consider the role and function of the analyst/therapist in regard to therapeutic action. Winnicott’s timeless paper takes up the difficulty and importance of tolerating and working with hate in the counter-transference, and the therapeutic action inherent in doing so. Loewald’s paper is a complex, but beautiful paper about the analyst/therapist’s function as a new good object, which presages intersubjective two-person theory, characterizing the analyst/therapist as “a participant observer,” and “a co-creator on the analytic stage.” Drawing from multiple theoretical perspectives - ego psychology, drive theory, developmental theory, object relations - Loewald gives us a surprisingly modern account of how development resumes and leads to change. His ideas about transference as a life force, in which “ghosts may be brought alive....in order to be laid to rest as ancestors” is one of the more moving accounts in our literature.

Winnicott, DW. (1949) Hate in the Countertransference. Int. J. Psycho-Anal. 30:69-75. [PEP Web Link](#)

Loewald, Hans. (1960). On the Therapeutic Action in Psychoanalysis. Int J. Psychoanalysis. 41:16-33. [PEP Web Link](#)

Session IV: April 14, Defense Analysis and Self-Psychology

American Ego Psychology dominated psychoanalytic thinking from the post-World War II era, to the 1980’s. Paul Gray is known as a leading founder of ego psychology’s defense analysis technique and theory of therapeutic action. In this session, we will contrast his model of change action, focused on drives and resistance, with that of the self-psychologists who approach change from a very different direction - that of empathic immersion in the patient’s affective experience and the therapist’s function as a mirroring self-object.

Gray, Paul. (1990). The Nature of the Therapeutic Action in Psychoanalysis. JAPA. 38:1083-1098. [PEP Web Link](#)

Ornstein, Paul. (1988). Multiple Curative Factors and Processes in the Psychoanalytic Psychotherapies. Chapter 8 in How Does Treatment Help: On the Modes of Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy. International Universities Press, 1988. Pages 105-126. [Available in the [Library](#)]

Session V: April 21, Listening to Process

What do we listen for when we listen to clinical process? What is the leading edge or lens we try to hear? In this session, we will compare Schwaber's approach, which privileges the leading affective edge and the patient's vantage point, with Roth's approach of listening for deep unconscious impulses, particularly aggression, as well as the ways the patient may resist the therapist's analyzing capacities.

Schwaber, Evelyn. (1990). Interpretation and the Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalysis. Int J Psychoanalysis. 71:229-240. [PEP Web Link](#)

Roth, P. (2001). Mapping the Landscape: Levels of Transference Interpretation. IJP. 82:533-543. [PEP Web Link](#)

Session VI: April 28, Something More than Interpretation - Contributions from Child Analysis

Child analysts have much to teach all of us about therapeutic action. In this session, we will discuss two, very different descriptions of analytic process and explore their equally different ideas about what brings about change. Herzog's paper demonstrates his talent as a complex theorist, who draws on multiple perspectives and is able to look at the role of intergenerational trauma, object relations and ego psychology in the moving account of his work with a precocious young girl. Harrison, also describing work with a traumatized child, shows us how a non-linear dynamic systems theory perspective might account for therapeutic process.

Herzog, J.M. (2005). Los Degradados: Out, down, dead: Transmitted and inflicted trauma as... Int. J. Psycho-Anal., 86:291-310. [PEP Web Link](#)

Harrison, A.M. and Tronick, E.Z. (2007). Contributions to Understanding Therapeutic Change: Now We Have A Playground. JAPA, 55/3: 853-874. [PEP Web Link](#)

Session VII: May 5, Analyst/Patient's Subjectivities - A Relational Perspective

In this session, we will look at the contributions of two relational theorists. Lew Aron considers the importance and centrality of the patient's exploration of the analyst's subjectivity, and Steven Cooper explores the issue of space and necessary privacy.

Aron, L. (1991). The patient's experience of the analyst's subjectivity. Psychoanalytic Dialogues 1: 29-51. [PEP Web Link](#)

Cooper, S.H. (2008). Privacy, Reverie, and the Analyst's Ethical Imagination. *Psychoanal Q.*, 77:1045-1073. [PEP Web Link](#)

Session VIII: May 12, The Therapist's Life and Personal Role

In this session, we will explore the role of the therapist's personhood and character and their impact on therapeutic action. As Kite suggests, "We analyze in character," yet the role of character is not always taken up. We will also consider the relationship between personhood and the therapist's individuality, realness and spontaneity. We will also look at a paper by McLaughlin that explores the analyst's regressions, during the course of a treatment, and the mutative impact of the analyst/therapists insights into this part of his own subjectivity.

Kite, J. (2008). Ideas of Influence: Impact of the Analyst's Character. *PQ*, 77:1075-1104. [PEP Web Link](#)

McLaughlin, J.T. (1988). The Analyst's Insights. *Psychoanal Q.*, 57:370-389. [PEP Web Link](#)

Session IX: May 19, Therapeutic Field and Tensions

Field Theory is a relatively new area of interest in North American Psychoanalysis. Reading Ferro, we will look at some basic concepts such as "the field," the jointly created narrative, the shared unconscious fantasy of the therapist/patient dyad, and the idea that both therapist and patient are attempting to come to terms with a shared emotional experience. In doing so, we will think about how these ideas may reshape our notions of therapeutic action. Drawing from Hoffman, we will also think about the therapist's tensions from the field, and the dialectic between theory and analytic freedom.

Ferro, A. (2002). The analytic dialogue: Possible worlds and transformation in the analytic field. In *The Analyst's Consulting Room*. East Essex: Brunner-Routledge. [Available in the [Library](#)]

Hoffman, IZ. (1994). Dialectical Thinking, Therapeutic Action in Analytic Process... *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*. 62:187-218. [PEP Web Link](#)

Session X: May 26, The Challenge of Mourning

In this session, we will explore the nature and transformative role of mourning in the therapeutic process. We will consider the perspectives of two object relations theorists as they contrast mourning and melancholia, and acceptance versus denial, or a manic attitude, toward reality and loss. Finally, we will think about the relationship of these ideas to a sense of aliveness and deadness in life and in psychoanalytic process.

Ogden, T. H. (2002). A New Reading of the Origins of Object-Relations Theory. *Int. J. Psychoanal*, 83:767-782. [PEP Web Link](#)

Steiner, J. (2005). The conflict between mourning and melancholia. *Psycholanal Quarterly*, 73:83-104. [PEP Web Link](#)

Additional Bibliography

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Bonaminio, Vincenzo (2008). The Person of the Analyst: Interpreting, Not Interpreting, And Countertransference, *Psychoanal. Q.*, 77:1105-1146. [PEP Web Link](#)

Burke, WF. And Tansey, MJ. (1991). Countertransference Disclosure and Models of Therapeutic Action. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis.* 27:351-384. [PEP Web Link](#).

Casement, P. (1991). Analytic Holding Under Pressure. Chapter 7 in *Learning from the Patient*. Guilford Press, 1991. Pages 129-139. [Available in the [Library](#)].

Chused, JF. (1996). The Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalysis: Abstinence and Informative Experiences. *JAPA.* 44:1047-1071. [PEP Web Link](#).

Cooper, AM. (1988) Changing Views of the Therapeutic Action in Analysis: Strachey, Loewald..., *Psychoanalytic Quarterly.* 57:15-27. [PEP Web Link](#).

Cooper, AM (1989). Concepts of Therapeutic Effectiveness in Psychoanalysis: A Historical Review. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry.* 9:4-25. [PEP Web Link](#).

Feinsilver, DB. Counteridentification, Comprehensive Countertransference, and Therapeutic Action: Toward Resolving the Intrapsychic-Interactional Dichotomy. (1999). *Psychoanalytic Quarterly.* 68:264-301. [PEP Web Link](#).

Ferro, A. and Basile, R. (2004). The Psychoanalyst as Individual. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 73:659-682. [PEP Web Link](#)

Fogel, G., Tyson, P., rep (1996). Classics Revisited: Loewald on the Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalysis. *JAPA.* 44:863-926. [PEP Web Link](#)

Fonagy, Peter, et al. (1993). Mental Representations and Processes in Therapeutic Action. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child.* 48:9-48. [PEP Web Link](#).

Greenberg, J. (2002). Psychoanalytic Goals, Therapeutic Action, and the Analyst's Tension. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly.* 71:651-678. [PEP Web Link](#).

Kite, J. (2008). Ideas of Influence: Impact of the Analyst's Character. *PQ,* 77:1075-1104. [PEP Web Link](#).

Modell, AH. (1976). "The Holding Environment" and the Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalysis. *JAPA.* 24:285-307. [PEP Web Link](#).

Pine, Fred. (1988). On the Four Psychologies of Psychoanalysis and the Nature of the Therapeutic Impact. Chapter 11 in *How Does Treatment Help: On the Modes of Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*. International Universities Press, 1988. Pages 145-155. [Available in the [Library](#)].

Ritvo, S, and Scharfman, MA. (1979). Conceptualizing the Nature of the Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalysis. *JAPA.* 27:627-642. [PEP Web Link](#).

Spezzano, C. (1995). "Classical" vs. "Contemporary" Theory: The Differences That Matter Clinically. *Contemporary Psychoanal.* 31:20-46. [PEP Web Link](#).

Stern, DB. (1996). The Social Construction of Therapeutic Action. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*. 16:265-293. [PEP Web Link](#).

Stern, DN, et al. (1998). Non Interpretive Mechanisms in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy: the Something More than Interpretation. *IJP*. 79:903-92. [PEP Web Link](#)

Summers, Frank. (2000). The Analyst's Vision of the Patient and the Therapeutic Action. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*. 17:547-564. [PEP Web Link](#).

Summers F. (2001). Therapeutic Action as the Creation of Meaning: What I do with..., *Psychoanalytic Psychology*. 18:635-655. [PEP Web Link](#).

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