

The Therapeutic Stance

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Inner-Directed Therapy

Health professionals should relax into uncertainty of what is unfolding, or about to unfold, within a client's present moment process in psychedelic-assisted therapy, and to support this appropriately. Needs and opportunities for healing and learning are met skilfully as they arise emergently, rather than through pre-planned processes.

Unconditional Positive Regard

This involves showing abiding recognition of a person's inherent human worth irrespective of the person's values and actions. When one is fully acknowledged and supported as they are, without judgment, resistance to change lessens (Rogers, 1942). With less resistance, one can more readily step into the change process.

Love

Health professionals should have lived experiences with agapic love (also known as altruistic or selfless love) to be able to empathically resonate and meet a client in that state and to be comfortable experiencing this natural human state within frameworks of professionalism as love is commonly encountered in this modality.

Appreciation for Human Suffering

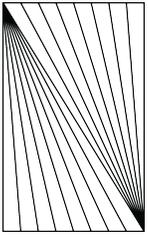
This appreciation recognizes suffering is part of the human condition (Cooper, 2016). Health professionals should trust the client's inner healing process by refraining from attempting to 'help' by palliating their experience. Instead, encourage them to lean into the experience while providing skillful and loving support.

Relationship-Centred Care

Attention to the quality of the therapeutic relationship is always prioritized with an understanding that desired therapeutic outcomes will naturally follow, in keeping with the contextual model of psychotherapy. Relationship-Centered Care also acknowledges that all relationships have power dynamics.

REFERENCES

Cooper, K. (2016). Guide Manual for Psilocybin-Assisted Therapy in the Research Setting.



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Empathetic Abiding Presence, and Listening

Demonstrable components of empathetic abiding presence include evenly suspended attention, mindfulness, empathetic listening, “doing by non-doing,” and responding to distress with calmness and equanimity (Phelps, 2017). A nurturing, safe clinical context is essential for healing.

Being Grounded, Self-Regulated, and Aligned

Being physiologically and energetically grounded, self-regulated, and aligned is essential when working with individuals in altered states of consciousness and with those who have experienced significant traumatic stress. Health professionals should self-monitor and self-regulate.

Orientation Towards Phenomenology

A phenomenological orientation concerns itself with unfolding the subjective “inner” experience of the client, including their thoughts, emotions, body sensations, behaviours, or impulses to act. Questions asked and language chosen invite client self-exploration.

Top-Down and Bottom-Up Processing

Using the model of the brain as a hierarchical information processor, top-down or long-route processing versus bottom-up or short-route processing refers to the area (or level) of the brain which is dominant in guiding the processing that is occurring in the client’s experience.

Self-Awareness and Ethical Integrity

Psychedelic-assisted therapy has unique ethical risks. Self-awareness includes investigating and challenging one’s implicit biases, establishing a strong and trustworthy therapeutic relationship, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and identifying and managing countertransference.

REFERENCES

- Phelps, J. (2017). Developing Guidelines and Competencies for the Training of Psychedelic Therapists. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 57(5), 450–487. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167817711304>