

Title of Presentation:

Overcoming Obstacles to Sex Offender Treatment

Submitted by:

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Abstract:

In November, 2006, the Center for Sex Offender Management released a paper summarizing recent developments in sex offender treatment. Newer perspectives reflect expansion from an exclusive reliance on relapse prevention, to include analysis of different offender pathways, focus on increasing offender engagement with treatment, and greater attention to the quality of the therapeutic alliance. This presentation will examine these new perspectives with a view toward decreasing “resistance” and treatment drop-out. Some of the “treatment obstacles” discussed will be offenders’ problems with affect regulation, failure to identify and address different offender pathways, establishing a negative or counter-therapeutic atmosphere, the myth of “teaching” empathy, intimacy problems, overwhelming shame, dissociation and therapist counter-transference. Some of the concepts and ideas are drawn from the field of trauma research and treatment, and adapted to sex offender treatment.

I. Overview of emerging concepts

- a. Offender pathways
- b. The “good lives’ model
- c. Treatment engagement
- d. The “how” of treatment —focus on therapist characteristics, delivery, and emotions

II.. Confrontation and group cohesiveness

- a. “Approach-explicit” offenders
- b. Deviant arousal
- c. Intimacy

III. Issues that should be addressed with DBT

- a. Affect dysregulation, impulsivity
- b. Skills deficits in handling negative affect
- c. Abstinence
- d. Understanding shame

IV. Dissociation

- a. Recognizing
- b. Importance

- c. Therapist reactions
- d. Reducing dissociative reactions

V. Fostering empathy

- a. Modeling
- b. Trauma processing
- c. Positive atmosphere, collaborative approach

VI. Transference and counter-transference

- a. Common transference issues and feelings
- b. Handling transference
- c. Sources of counter-transference

“If we see their problems as current moral weakness rather than as the scabs of old wounds, we rob them of their history.” Joel Dwoskin, Ph.D., University of Arizona

“We don’t try to cure the patient of what happened to them. We try to cure them of what they now do to themselves and others in their attempts to cope with what happened to them.” Althea Horner

“Resistance is what we call it when clients try to defend themselves from therapists’ mistakes.” John Briere

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Useful websites:

Childtrauma.org (Bruce Perry)

ACEstudy.org (Dr. Felitti)

Traumacenter.org(Bessel van der Kolk)

Trauma-pages.com/a/shore-2001a.php (Allen Schore)

Trauma-pages.com/a/shore-2001b.php (Allen Schore)

JohnBriere.com