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The Relationship in Counseling and Psychotherapy

Components, Consequences, and Theoretical Antecedents

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This two-part article suggests ingredients in the therapy relationship that are common to all interventions. It then examines similarities and differences in how the relationship works within the three dominant approaches to therapy. The overall aim of the article is to restimulate research and theory on the relationship. The first part defines the relationship and proposes three components to all therapeutic relationships: a working alliance, a transference configuration, and a real relationship. Five propositions are offered about the operation of each component within and across theoretical orientations. The second part examines how views of the relationship in perspectives broadly labeled psychoanalytic, humanistic, and learning vary according to three theoretical dimensions: the centrality, real-unreal, and means-end dimensions. Central research findings are reviewed for each theoretical perspective, the current state of research is examined for each, and suggestions are offered for future directions.