

The New Jersey Institute for Training in Psychoanalysis

#S206 - Case Seminar: Working Alliance

Spring 2025

Via Zoom

Instructor: Michael DeNichilo, LCSW

Course description:

Zetzel was among the first to use the term, "therapeutic alliance." However, it was Greenson who described the therapeutic alliance as a working collaboration between analysand and analyst. It is based upon the idea that this particular alliance is an example of a largely non-neurotic, rational support that the patient derived from his/her analyst. To the degree that a sound therapeutic alliance is a good predictor of success in therapy, its importance can not be underestimated. Thus, we will focus on fostering, developing, strengthening, and ultimately solidifying a healthy bond between analyst and analysand.

Assignment:

A written paper of approximately 4-6 pages on a clinical case which demonstrates some vestige of the working alliance with a patient. Consider describing a rupture and/or repair experience with a patient and the impact on the working alliance. Please use 2 or more readings from the class to illustrate how they informed or deepened your understanding of the working alliance. The paper will be due on the last session of class.

Objectives:

At the end of this course the candidate will be able to:

- Define and describe the concept of working alliance.
- Describe how the understanding of the working alliance has changed over time.
- Identify the factors that contribute to a good working alliance.
- Identify several interventions that help work through breaches in the working alliance.

Session 1 - COVID & THE IMPACT ON PSYCHOANALYSIS

How COVID-19 has affected the practice of psychodynamic psychotherapy and psychoanalysis will be explored.

Readings:

Merchant, J. (2021). Working online due to the Covid-19 pandemic: A research and literature review. *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 66, 484-505.

Leutrum, M. (2022). The analyst as user illusion: Therapy in the time of COVID-19. *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 67, 170-182.

Feijo, P. L. et. al. (2023). Interaction structures in the online psychodynamic psychotherapy of a patient with anxiety symptoms. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 39, 1, 123-141.

Session 2 - TELECOMMUNICATION & PSYCHOANALYSIS

This class will discuss the impact of technology on the psychoanalytic frame.

Readings:

Marzi, A. (2023). Psychoanalysis, the digital world, and the pandemic: Frontiers and challenges in different settings. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 43, 1, 13-23.

Kegerreis, S. (2022) The experience of time boundaries in remote working. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 38, 754-768.

Trub, L. & Magaldi, D. (2022). The phone in the room: How technology is reshaping analytic space. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 39, 3, 253-265.

Session 3- INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKING ALLIANCE

We will begin to discuss and analyze the concept of the working alliance.

Readings:

Greenson, R. (2008). The working alliance and transference neurosis. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 77, 1, 77-102.

Cooper, A.M. (2008). Commentary on Greenson's "The working alliance and the transference neurosis. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 77, 1, 103-119.

Barsness, R. E. (2021). Therapeutic practices in relational psychoanalysis: A qualitative study. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 38, 22-30.

Session 4 - THE ROLE OF ABSTINENCE & NEUTRALITY

We will consider the role of abstinence and neutrality in the psychoanalytic treatment.

Readings:

Cooper, S. (2022). The activity of neutrality. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 91, 2, 355-369.

Brenner, C. (1979). Working alliance, therapeutic alliance and transference. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 27 (supp), 137-157.

Athar, M. (2021). Freud's rule of abstinence: Implications for brief therapy: A case report. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis-Open peer review and debate*, 8, 26, 1-33.

Session 5 - THE REAL RELATIONSHIP

We will explore the working alliances and the real relationship.

Readings:

Sami, J. E. (2022). Using therapeutic metacommunication and systematic monitoring of the working alliance in adolescent psychotherapy: a clinical case study, *The Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review*, 45, 2, 116-127.

Viederman, M. (1990). The real person of the analyst and his role in the process of psychoanalytic cure. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 39, 2, 451-489.

Shavit, Y. & Tolmacz, R. (2023). The therapist as an ally of lost good objects. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 39, 69-85.

De Masi, F., Capozzi, P. & Kamm, H. (2020). The analytic relationship. Consideration on defining and working with the concept. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 7, 7, 1-25.

Session 6 - CULTURE & THE WORKING ALLIANCE

This class explores intersectionality and its impact on the working alliance.

Readings:

Ullrich, H. E. (2022). Culture, empathy, and the therapeutic alliance. *Psychodynamic Psychiatry*, 50, 51-164.

Friedman, R. C. & Downey, J. (2022). Internalized homophobia and the negative therapeutic reaction. *Psychodynamic Psychiatry*, 50, 88-99.

Session 7- ALLIANCES WITH PATIENTS WITH PERSONALITY DISORDERS

The working alliance in special situations/diagnostic categories will be the focus of this class.

Readings:

Adler, G. (1999). The Alliance and the more disturbed patient. The therapeutic alliance, pp. 75-91. Classic Books.

Chaplan, R. (2013). How to help get stuck analyses unstuck. *Journal of American Psychoanalytic Association*, 61, 3, 591-604.

Session 8 - REPAIRING ALLIANCE RUPTURES

In our last session we will evaluate the course as a whole and discuss ruptures and repairs.

Readings:

Safran, J., Muran, J. & Shaker, A. (2014). Research on therapeutic impasses and ruptures in the therapeutic alliance. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 50, 211-232.

Freud, S. (2024). Remembering, repeating, and working through. In Solms, M. (Ed). *The Revised Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, XII, 141-154*. Rowman & Littlefield.