

## Ability to work through the termination phase of therapy

### Knowledge

Knowledge that preparation for endings is an integral part of the process from the outset, and not just a distinct phase
Knowledge of the dynamics of separation, loss and mourning as the basis for understanding the client's subjective experience of endings/separations
An ability to draw on knowledge of the specific significance of separation and loss in clients with different personality structures (e.g. in borderline clients)

### Application

#### Ability to be attuned to direct and indirect references to termination/separations

An ability to systematically draw attention to, and address, the client's feelings, unconscious fantasies and anxieties about the ending of therapy
An ability to systematically draw attention to, and address, the defences the client uses to protect themselves from awareness of endings or from the feelings associated with endings through:
articulating the feelings that are triggered by endings (so as to pre-empt acting out and premature endings).
responding to the client's decision to end prematurely by helping them to consider whether unconscious factors may be influencing such a decision.
responding to the indications of regression near the end of treatment (e.g. a symptomatic deterioration) by linking this with the feelings and fantasies associated with endings.
An ability (throughout the therapy), to help the client become aware of their subjective experience of separations as they occur in the context of the therapy and in their life (with the aim of helping them work through the feelings associated with separations and loss)
When responding to a client's expressed wish to terminate a therapy before its agreed end, an ability to critically appraise whether the therapy may have reached an unresolvable impasse such that ending and/or referral onwards may be the most helpful way forwards

### **Ability to prepare the client for the ending**

An ability to identify clients who are likely to be adversely affected by endings and the risks this may pose for them (e.g. risk of self-harm)

An ability to understand and work in the transference with the significance for the client of the separation from the therapist:

an ability to tolerate and address the client's anger and/or disappointment about ending

An ability to maintain a focus on the experience of endings as the treatment approaches its end

An ability to recognise the ending phase of treatment as an opportunity to re-visit the core interpersonal patterns and conflicts that have been worked on in the therapy

An ability to keep in mind, and help the client to reflect on, the meaning of the time frame of therapy throughout the treatment:

an ability to be aware of any specific countertransference reactions to the time frame that may result in an enactment (e.g. colluding with the client's wish to create an atmosphere of timelessness)

An ability to maintain the boundary created by the time-limited nature of the therapy, particularly in response to interpersonal pressures to extend the therapy (and hence avoid facing the ending)

An ability to help the client review the therapy as a whole (e.g. whether they have achieved their aims) and to help them express gratitude and/or disappointment, as appropriate .

An ability to take responsibility for the personal resonances that endings will have for the therapist so that this does not impinge on the client's exploration and experience of ending

An ability to make an assessment of the client's clinical needs post therapy, as part of the preparation for ending, including the need for follow-up sessions or future therapy:

an ability to consider decisions about the client's future needs in light of the transference implications of such arrangements