

**When Helping Doesn't Help—  
Overcoming Therapeutic Resistance**

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**David's Paper**

- When Helping Doesn't Help: What to Do When Your Client Doesn't Want to Change. (March / April, 2017). *Psychotherapy Networker*, 41(2), 18 – 27, 60.  
– <https://www.psychotherapynetworker.org/blog/details/1160/when-helping-doesnt-help>

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**Two Questions**

- How effective are the current “schools” of therapy in the treatment of depression and anxiety disorders?
- How effective are we as individual clinicians?

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### Disappointing Results with Most Outcome Studies

- At best, only 50% of depressed and anxious patients, at most, improve when treated with
  - Psychotherapy—all types
  - Antidepressants
  - Placebos
    - A meta-analysis of cognitive-behavioural therapy for adult depression, alone and in comparison with other treatments. [Can J Psychiatry](#), 2013 Jul; 58(7): 376-85
    - CBT for adult anxiety disorders: A meta-analysis of . . . Controlled trials. *J. Clin. Psychiatry*, 2008 April; 69(4): 621-632

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### Clinical Experiences Confirm Research Findings

- Some patients seem to resist the clinician's sincere efforts to help
  - The woman who didn't want to do psychotherapy homework

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### Process Research—How Does Psychotherapy Actually Work?

- What are the key ingredients of therapeutic success or failure?
- What's different about the patients who do not respond to treatment?
- Can we use this information to improve outcomes?

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**Results of Process Research**

- Empathy influenced recovery from depression
  - But the causal effect was only modest
    - Burns, D. D., & Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (1992). Therapeutic empathy and recovery from depression in cognitive - behavioral therapy: a structural equation model. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 60(3): 441 - 449

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**Results of Process Research**

- Psychotherapy HW compliance also influenced recovery from depression
  - And the causal effect was large
- Patient "Willingness" also had large direct and indirect effects on recovery
  - Burns, D. D., & Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (1991). Coping styles, homework compliance and the effectiveness of cognitive - behavioral therapy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 59(2): 305 - 311.

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**Results (cont'd)**

- Willingness effect replicated in five different samples
  - Inpatients and outpatients
- First variable in the world literature with large, robust and consistent causal effects on recovery from depression
  - Burns, D. Westra, H., Trockel, M., & Fisher, A. (2012) Motivation and Changes in Depression. *Cognitive Therapy and Research* DOI 10.1007/s10608-012-9458-3 Published online 22 April 2012

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**Could We Boost Therapeutic Effectiveness by**

- Developing new techniques to address resistance and enhance patient motivation?
  - But what is "resistance?"
  - And can it be modified?

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**Most Traditional Views of Resistance are Negative**

- Secondary gains
  - Neediness / fears of being alone
- Fears of change
- Addiction to self-pity and role as victim
- Negative sense of identity

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**New Model for Therapeutic Resistance**

- Outcome Resistance
  - Ambivalence about change
- Process Resistance
  - Ambivalence about doing the work

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### Outcome and Process Resistance Differ for Each Target

Target	Outcome Resistance	Process Resistance
Depression	Non-acceptance	Homework
Anxiety	Magical thinking	Exposure
Relationship problems	Not wanting to get close	Blame
Habits & addictions	Entitlement & pleasure	Discipline & deprivation

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### New Model (cont'd)

- The patient's resistance often
  - Reveals something positive and awesome about the patient's core values.
  - Is beneficial and provides tangible benefits.

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### What's TEAM-CBT?

- T = Testing
- E = Empathy
- A = (Paradoxical) Agenda Setting**
- M = Methods

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**Clinical Examples**

- Janice: "I murdered my baby."
- Rameesh: "They're conspiring against me!"
- Sam: "They locked me in a walk-in freezer."
- Bennie: "I'm a hopeless case, and there's nothin' you can do about it!"

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**Does TEAM-CBT Really Deliver Superior Results?**

- Clinical experiences extremely encouraging
- Preliminary research also encouraging
- Outcome study at the Feeling Good Institute in Mt. View, CA is about to be launched
  - Must be very cautious until we see those results!

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**Resources for Clinicians and Patients**

- [www.feelinggood.com](http://www.feelinggood.com)
  - Dr. Burns' *Feeling Good Podcasts* and *Feeling Good Blogs*
    - for you and your clients
  - Workshop announcements

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**Resources (cont'd)**

- Drs. Burns offers unlimited free psychotherapy training for local mental health professionals at Stanford
  - Tuesdays, 5 to 7:30 pm
    - Improve your psychotherapy skills
    - Difficult case consultation
    - Personal work

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**Resources (cont'd)**

- *Tools, Not Schools, of Therapy*
  - Dr. Burns' interactive psychotherapy e-textbook
  - email [david@feelinggood.com](mailto:david@feelinggood.com) for more information
- *Therapist's Toolkit*
  - State of the art assessment and treatment tools
  - email [david@feelinggood.com](mailto:david@feelinggood.com) for more information or check it out in the conference bookstore

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**Resources (cont'd)**

- Feeling Good Institute, Mt. View, CA
- [www.feelinggoodinstitute.com](http://www.feelinggoodinstitute.com)
  - T.E.A.M. Certification program
  - Mentoring / clinical supervision
  - Training, including weekend workshops
  - Weekly online courses, including CEs
  - Treatment, including intensives

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### Resources (cont'd)

- Dr. Burns' books for the general public
  - *Feeling Good*
  - *Feeling Good Together*
  - *The Feeling Good Handbook*
  - *Ten Days to Self-Esteem*
  - *When Panic Attacks*
  - *Intimate Connections*
- There's a new book in the works!

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