

# Addressing Psychotherapy Dropout: Strategies for Engaging Clients and Improving Outcomes

Premature termination is a significant problem in psychotherapy, with deleterious impacts on both clients and therapists. For example, research shows that clients who prematurely terminate show poorer treatment outcomes, are less likely to make lasting changes in their symptoms, and are more likely to over-utilize the health care system. Research also shows that when clients end treatment prematurely, their therapists often experience a sense of failure with the loss. Additionally, repeated dropout by clients can lead to experiences of demoralization and burnout in their providers. Current estimates indicate that approximately 1 in 5 clients will drop out of psychotherapy and/or counseling prematurely. Although these numbers may differ depending on the setting and client type, almost all therapists will experience premature termination at some point in their practice.

The purpose of this workshop is provide strategies and approaches that therapists can use to reduce premature termination in their practice. This workshop will begin with a discussion of what premature termination is and why some clients choose to end treatment prematurely. It will then cover the latest research on the frequency of premature termination and client, therapist, treatment, and

## Target Audience

Psychologists      Social Workers      Counselors  
Therapists      Psychiatrists      Nurses  
Course level: Intermediate

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

1. Define premature termination in psychotherapy and articulate a conceptual model for why it occurs.
2. Identify the frequency of premature termination in psychotherapy based on the latest empirical research.
3. Recognize at least two impacts of premature termination on both clients and therapists
4. Report at least five client, provider, setting, and treatment risk factors for premature termination.
5. Identify 8 strategies for reducing premature termination and explain how they can be applied in clinical practice.

## Seminar Schedule

Typically begins at 11:00 AM and ends at 2:15 PM Eastern time. There is one 15 minute break. However, check the webinar schedule.

## Outline

- Part 1: Understanding Premature Termination in Psychotherapy
  - The Problem of Premature Termination
  - Defining the Construct
  - Frequency
  - Risk Factors for Premature Termination
    - Client
    - Provider
    - Setting
    - Treatment
  - Why premature termination occur
- II. Part 2: Strategies for Reducing Premature Termination in Psychotherapy
  - Providing role induction
  - Incorporating preferences into the treatment decision-making process
  - Planning for appropriate termination
  - Providing education about patterns of change in therapy
  - Strengthening hope
  - Enhancing motivation for treatment
  - Fostering the therapeutic alliance
  - Assessing and discussing treatment progress
  - Additional strategies

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## Continuing Education Credit

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## The Presenter

Joshua K. Swift, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Idaho State University and a licensed psychologist in Idaho. At Idaho State University he teaches graduate and undergraduate courses on the practice of psychotherapy, ethics, and supervision. Dr. Swift is an internationally recognized psychotherapy process and outcome researcher, particularly for his work on premature termination in psychotherapy and the integration of client preferences into treatment. He has an American Psychological Association published book on Premature Termination, over 50 peer-reviewed journal articles, and has presented his research across the globe. He has also been recognized with several local, national, and international research and teaching awards.

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This seminar has been reviewed and approved by Keith Hannan, Ph.D., Phil Rich, LICSW, and Loreen Yearick, MSN, RN. This approval expires on March 1, 2022.

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