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 healthcare system. Research also shows that when clients and 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 to provide strategies and approaches that therapists can use to reduce premature termination in their practice. This workshop will begin with a discussion of why 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 setting effects. The workshop will also cover the latest research on the frequency of premature termination and client, therapist, treatment, and setting effects.

Learning Objectives

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.

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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Target Audience

Psychologists
Therapists
Social Workers
Psychiatrists
Counselors
Nurses
Course level: Intermediate

Outline

Begin 11 AM ET
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 occurs
II. Part 2: Strategies for Reducing Premature Termination in therapy
Providing role induction
Break 12:30-12:45 PM ET
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
End 2:15 PM ET

Continuing Education Credit
To earn CE’s, you must attend the entire webinar. No partial credit is available. For both the webinar and the home study version, you will have to pass a post-test with 80% correct and complete a seminar evaluation to earn the certificate. You must take the test up to three times. Participants will earn 3 CE’s for attending once they have completed these requirements.

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Joshua K. Swift, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology, Idaho State University

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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.

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