

HAVING READ:

PSYCHOTHERAPIE – DYNAMISCH, INTENSIV, DIREKT: LEHRBUCH
ZUR INTENSIVEN DYNAMISCHEN KURZPSYCHOTHERAPIE
BY PAUL TROENDLE

Esther Rosen-Bernays, PhD

Anything you ever wanted to know about ISTDP, - “Intensive Short Term Dynamic Psychotherapy” – the “ins and outs” of this fascinating psychotherapeutic treatment approach, you find it in this very comprehensive book. It is published by Psychosozial Verlag (ISBN-10: 3898064794) and it is written in German. Our Swiss colleague, Paul Troendle provides a rich foundation of philosophical thought and scientific findings from areas such as anthropology, Freud’s psychoanalysis, developmental psychology as well as neurosciences which he sees Habib Davanloo’s work to be based on. Troendle’s vast and detailed knowledge of the classical as well as the contemporary psychoanalytic thinking provides a strong context in which he presents us with the ideas of Habib Davanloo, the founding theorist and clinician of ISTDP. His rendition of theory and technique of this captivating paradigm of psychotherapy is precise, rich and clear. Yet at once this book carries the potential of leading the reader into a morass of factoids where she might lose sight of the forest for the trees.

The goals of ISTDP are identical to the goals of the psychoanalytic treatment: the therapist aims to change the character pathology of the patient by resolving the core neurotic conflict. Cornerstone of ISTDP is a conceptualization of emotional processes based on Freud’s original understanding yet crystallized in two simple models which were formulated originally by Menninger, Malan and then Davanloo: the Triangle of Conflict in connection with the Triangle of Person. This conceptualization serves the ISTDP therapist as an understanding of the state of the patient at any moment: is the patient engaging in Defense, experiencing Anxiety or is he experiencing a feeling or impulse.

In following a carefully developed sequence of interventions and techniques, the “Central Dynamic Sequence” (CDS), the ISTDP therapist is aiming for a breakthrough into the unconscious. By way of applying several well defined techniques the therapist seeks to develop an alliance with the patient that goes beyond conscious cooperation. The patient’s repressed emotions, pushing toward conscious experience, constitute an important factor in the establishment of the unconscious therapeutic alliance with the therapist. This process is not a linear one. Troendle speaks - with Davanloo - of a spiral or circular process. A “major unlocking” of the unconscious enables the patient to experience the whole spectrum of the complex of emotions. The patient’s experience of his murderous rage, guilt, pain and grief is the precondition for real forgiveness and deeply felt exoneration. Now the channels are open for the capacity of love.

Troendle’s presentation of the Central Dynamic Sequence offers the student of ISTDP a rich palette of examples of interventions as well as the rationale for interventions, detailed explanations as well as practical suggestions and caveats about the likely mistakes of a beginner. The reader will also find a diverse array of vignettes based mostly on Troendle’s own clinical work.

While Davanloo originally saw highly resistant patients or patients with low anxiety tolerance, high fragility and Superego pathology as inappropriate candidates for ISTDP, Troendle also describes

Davanloo's later modifications of the original process of therapy - the graded technique which allows a much larger patient population to benefit from ISTDP. Troendle offers a list of patient characteristics that would still lead to the exclusion of a patient from the treatment of ISTDP, which include patients with severe cognitive disruptions such as psychotic processes as well as patients with endogenous depressions and chronic alcohol and drug dependency.

Paul Troendle's book "Psychotherapy – Dynamic, Intense and Focused" will undoubtedly serve as a critical reference book in the understanding of theoretical ISTDP concepts and their application to the therapeutic work.

About the author

Esther Rosen-Bernays is a clinical psychologist with a private practice in Rockville, Maryland. After post graduation from the University of Zurich, she has been practicing psychotherapy for individuals and couples and families based on the psychoanalytic reference realm. More recently she embraced ISTDP concepts and techniques, completing a three year training program at the Washington School of Psychiatry.