

TOPICAL WEBINAR FOR APA MEMBERS

An Educational Resource from Newport Healthcare

Beyond Efficacy: Unveiling the Mechanisms of Change in Psychotherapy

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ATTENDANCE

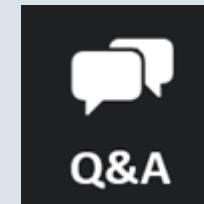
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RECORDING

- A recording of this presentation will be emailed to everyone in 2 weeks' time.
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HAVE A QUESTION?

- You are on mute. Communicate using the **Q&A box** in the webinar screen. Attendees can view and upvote on submitted questions in the Q&A box to help presenters identify popular topics.
- Presentation slides will be posted in the **chat box** of your webinar screen.





Dr. Michael Roeske

PRESENTER

- Michael Roeske, PsyD
 - *Senior Director, Center for Research and Innovation, Newport Healthcare*

Agenda

- From THE and MY beginning
- The conflation of theory, technique, and efficacy research
- ESTs/common factors dialectic; or a complementarity (e.g., EBPP)
- The contextual model
- Training, supervision, and practice



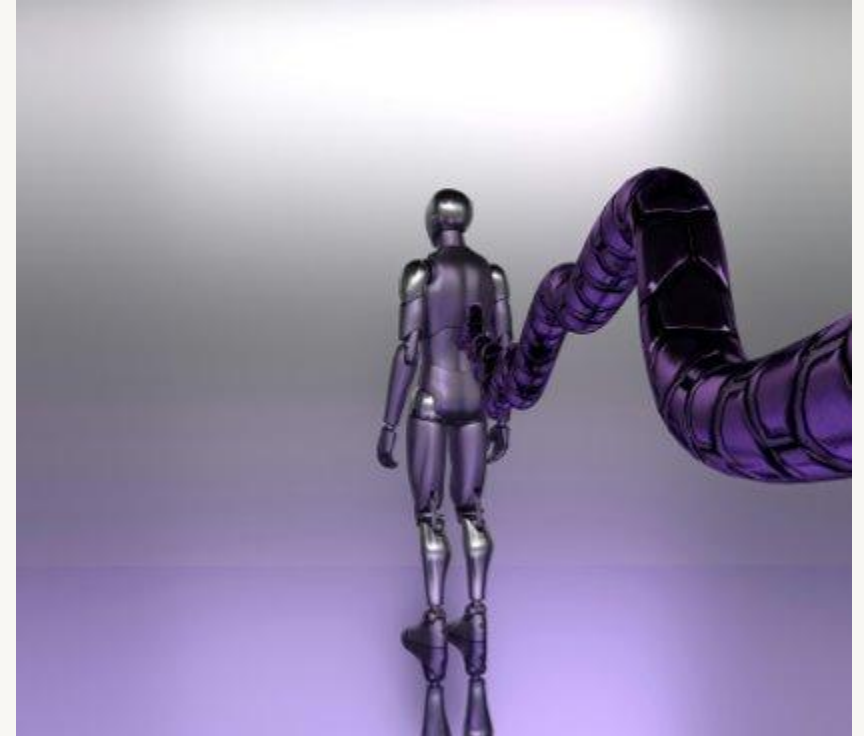
From THE beginning

- “Anna O.” and the “talking cure”
 - *“On one occasion she related the details of the first appearance of a particular symptom and, to Breuer's great astonishment, this resulted in its complete disappearance” (Jones, 1953, p. 202)*
- A specific technique and theory emerged and was refined (Freud, 1900/1983)



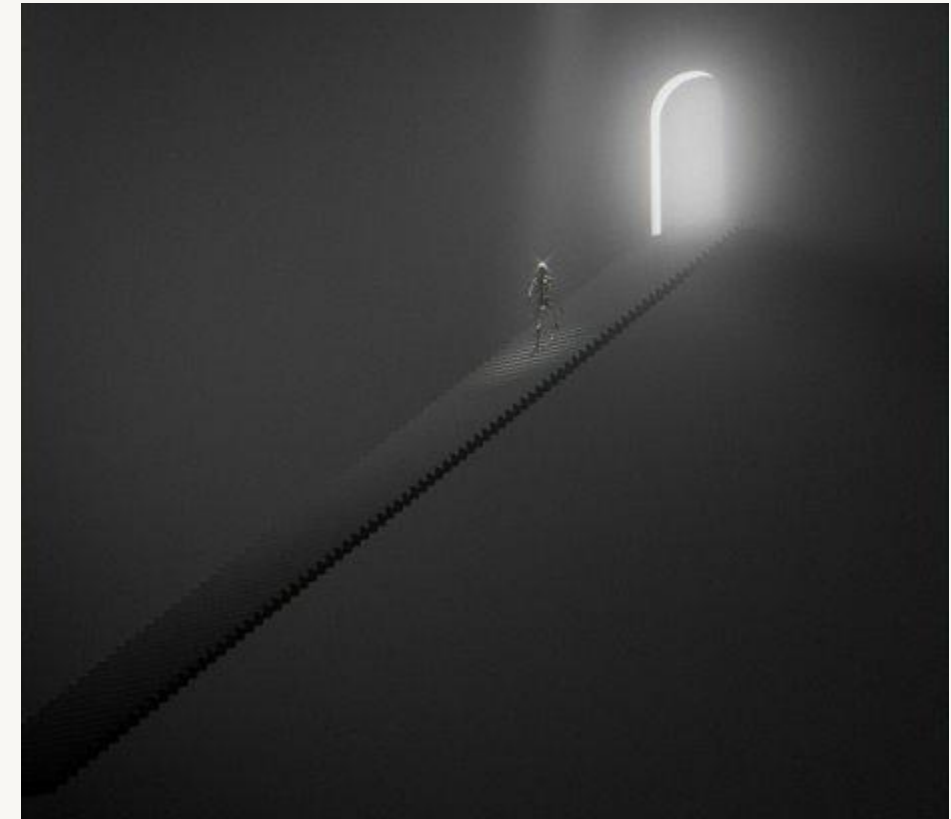
New theories developed

- Less maladaptive thinking (CBT)
- Improving relations (psychoanalytic)
- Acceptance of oneself (Acceptance & Commitment Therapy)
- Expressing difficult emotions (Emotion-Focused Therapy)



From MY beginning

- Pressure to adopt a theory and technique
- Along with research, presented as synonymous
- Patients taught me something else
 - *Silences*
 - *Rapprochements*



A (former) chronically suicidal patient

- 25-year-old female graduate and accomplished athlete
- History of suicidality, NSSIB, depression, and an ED and AUD
- First suicide attempt at 13 and two others
- Recently resumed alcohol consumption



Maybe the cart is before the horse

- RCTs show therapy effective for various disorders, e.g., for depression (Cuijpers, et al., 2023)
- Not the same as evidence about how therapy works (Kazdin, 2007)
- That question is complicated and difficult to answer (Cuijpers, et al., 2019)



A theory is just a theory

- Most psychotherapies provide one, e.g., changing maladaptive cognitions lessens depression
- Little empirical support for those mechanisms of change (Cuijpers, et al., 2019)
- Unvalidated conflation of efficacy research, theory, and technique



What happens in practice

- Most clinicians are guided to adopt a single theoretical model (Weissman et al., 2006)
- Practice evolves toward an informal eclecticism based on experience with patients (Behran, 2022)
- Majority of clinicians identify as integrative/eclectic and endorse common factors (Cook et al., 2010)
- Most endorsed techniques are relationship oriented



A dialectic/competing paradigms

- Specific factors or empirically supported treatments (ESTs; APA, 2006)
- Nonspecific or common factors (Cuipjers, et al., 2019)



ESTs

- Clinicians were practicing without specific goals or a way to measure success (Westen et al., 2004)
- Spurred by success of pharmacology research to prioritize medications over psychotherapy
- Mandate to use and train clinicians in ESTs picked up momentum in 1995 with the first APA Task Force



ESTs continued

- NIMH using pharmaceutical research methods to evaluate psychotherapy (Castelnuovo et al., 2005)
- APA argued “best research evidence” was vital to evidence-based practice (APA, 2006)
- Considered “gold standard” (Sakuluk et al., 2019)



Criticisms of ESTs

- Brief, manualized treatment, the absence of common factors, and lack of generalizability (APA, 2006)
- Inconsistent evidential value and low power and replicability estimates (Sakuluk et al., 2019)
- Assumptions of ESTs are not, themselves, empirically supported (Westen et al., 2004)



Common factors model

- Introduced in 1936 (Rosenzweig), or the Dodo Bird Verdict from *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll, 2011)
- Frank (1961) popularized and influenced modern view (Cuipjers, et al., 2019)
- Best and most developed is the contextual model (Wampold, 2015; Wampold & Imel 2015)



Contextual model (CM)

- Psychotherapy is a “social healing practice”(Wampold, 2015, p. 270).
- Initial therapeutic relationship
- Three pathways/theoretical mechanisms of change



CM - Initial therapeutic relationship

- Preceding the work
- Determining if the therapist:
 - *Is trustworthy?*
 - *Is in possession of necessary expertise?*
 - *Will take time and effort to understand the problem and the context?*



CM - The real relationship

- “[T]he extent to which each is genuine with the other and perceives/experiences the other in ways that benefit the other” (Gelso, 2024, p. 119)
- General and unusual social processes, such as being confidential with limitations, and discussing difficult material without loss of the relationship



CM - Expectations

- Strong influence on experience and symptom maintenance, motivation, and change (Kirsch, 1999)
- All treatments are significantly influenced by placebo effects in clinical settings (Colloca, 2018)
- Critical patients believe explanations for difficulties and the therapy will help (Wampold, 2015)



CM - Specific ingredients

- Stipulates a treatment exists, particularly one the patient finds acceptable and likely to help (Wampold, 2015)
- Induces expectations and action, e.g., journaling
- If it produces action, it will work



Evidence for common factors

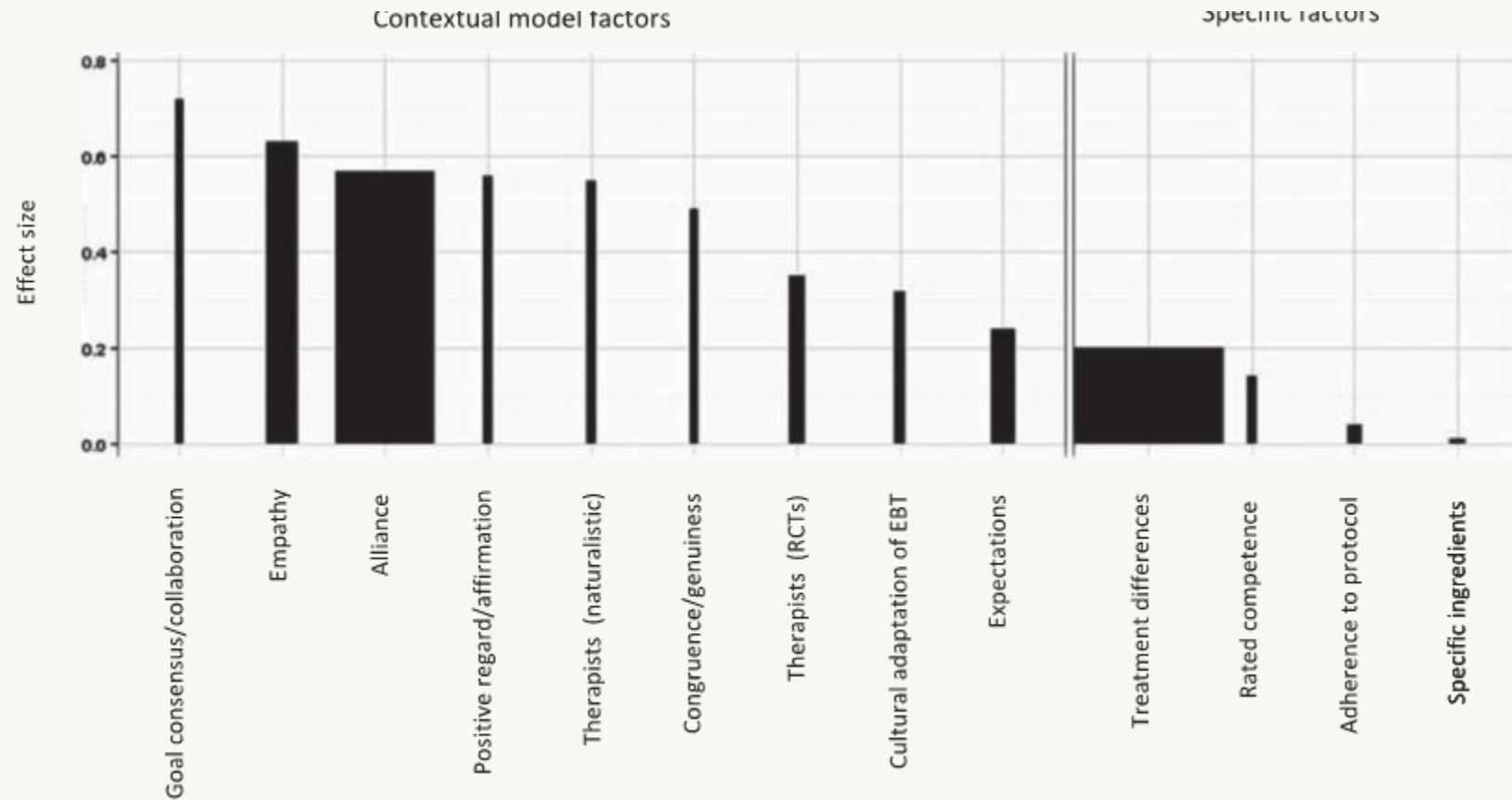


Figure 1 Effect sizes for common factors of the contextual model and specific factors. Width of bars is proportional to number of studies on (Wampold, 2015, p. 273)

Limitations of common factors

- There is no definitive list (Behran, 2022)
- Explaining efficacy through common factors is also speculative (Cuijpers, et al., 2019)
- Alternate is many roads lead to Rome
- Few component meta-analyses and methodological issues, such as lack of power and risk of bias



Implications

- Limitations in evidence and power battles will not move field forward (Mulder et al., 2017)
- Change likely results from dynamic interplay of both, but uncertainty on how to balance
- Orthogonal axes rather than single continuum



Training, supervision and practice

- EBPP (APA, 2021) is a good model
- Best available research, clinical expertise, patient characteristics, culture, and preferences
- Read *How important are common factors in psychotherapy? An update* (Wampold, 2015)
- Reshaping clinical training, licensing, and third-party payment



AUDIENCE Q&A

FINAL THOUGHTS

- A recording will be emailed to you in 2 weeks. It will include the presentation slides.
- Please take our survey immediately after the webinar has concluded.

THANK YOU!

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