

The foundation of treatment for the traumatized patient: A model for the development and maintenance of the therapeutic relationship

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Traumas can cause a variety of social problems. Those who have been traumatized may feel like no one understands them, be anxious and distrustful of others, feel awkward socially, and turn to isolating themselves. These problems make it challenging for clinicians to connect with and to treat these types of patients. However, the psychotherapy literature clearly shows that the therapeutic relationship is the foundation of treatment, and without it, it becomes much more difficult to help patients. The purpose of this presentation is to address this problem and to offer a model to aid in the development and maintenance of the therapeutic relationship with those who have been traumatized. We will review the social challenges faced by traumatized individuals, explore the topic of evidence-based relationships, and then discuss the model itself. The model emphasizes the core skills of empathy (as described by Carl Rogers), meta communication (i.e. discussing the communication and the relationship itself), and collaboration. The approach is designed to be broadly applicable for anyone in the health related professions who work with those who have been traumatized. Future directions for the model will also be discussed.

Biography

Edward MacPhee received his MD from UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. He did his residency training in psychiatry at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic (WPIC). He works at the Ann Arbor VA Healthcare System, which is affiliated with the University of Michigan. There, he is part of the PTSD Clinical Team and also serves as the chief of the clinic. His interests include the therapeutic relationship, humanistic psychotherapy, and mental health recovery.

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