

# Radical Introspection for Therapists:

## An Evolving Framework

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# A little about me

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- ❖ Atlanta based Licensed Clinical & Community Psychologist, & Founder at Atlanta Trauma Therapy & Consulting
- ❖ Delivers specialized culturally responsive trauma treatments to vulnerable populations such as military veterans, BIPOC individuals, and members of the LGBTQ+ community
- ❖ Coach/workshops for Black entrepreneurs
- ❖ Community workshop leader
- ❖ Clinical supervisor to clinical psychology graduate students
- ❖ Adjunct Professor; Emory University
- ❖ Creator of Introspective Journal and the Radical Introspective Supervision Framework

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**ICEBREAKER**  
- One word

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# Our objectives

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1

Introduce mindfulness  
in the context of radical  
introspection

2

Introduce essential  
elements of Radical  
Introspection

3

Discuss the relationship  
between radical  
introspection and  
clinical work

4

Engage attendees in  
reflective experience of  
radical introspection  
and subsequent  
processing



# Why focus on the therapist?

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**Ethics** - “As the primary vehicle of therapy, the therapist has an ethical responsibility to their own personal development to benefit themselves and to reduce the likelihood of harm to the patient.” – B. N. Green. PhD

**Professional Development/Continuous Work** - “Psychiatry is a strange field because, unlike any other field of medicine, you never really finish. Your greatest instrument is you, yourself and the world of self- understanding is endless.” – Irvin Yalom, MD

**Clinically Relevant**-“Whenever two people meet, there are really six people present. There is each man as he sees himself, each man as the other person sees him, and each man as he really is.” - William James



Much of the literature on therapy efficacy emphasizes the therapy relationship as one of the most important if not the most important factor in effective therapy across treatment modalities.

Increasingly, our field has acknowledged the therapy relationship as a dynamic, collaborative experience informed by patient and practitioner.

**Whenever two people meet, there are really six people present. There is each man as he sees himself, each man as the other person sees him, and each man as he really is.**

*- William James*

## THERAPIST CHARACTERISTICS

Effective therapy relationships include the therapist's embodiment of certain characteristics and the use of specific techniques across modalities and orientations.

The therapist must embody the following characteristics:

- Flexibility
- Honesty
- Demonstrating respect
- Trustworthiness
- Confidence
- Warmth
- Genuine interest
- Openness

## THERAPIST TECHNIQUES

These relationships are also reinforced when a therapist utilizes these techniques or skills:

- Exploration
- Reflection
- Noting past therapy success
- Accurate interpretation
- Facilitating the expression of affect
- Attending to the patient's experience

Ackerman, Steven & Hilsenroth, Mark. (2003). A review of therapist characteristics and techniques positively impacting the therapeutic alliance. *Clinical psychology review*. 23. 1-33.  
10.1016/S0272-7358(02)00146-0



# Mindfulness & Radical Introspective Practice

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## MINDFULNESS

Full, flexible, nonjudgmental attention to the present moment, with willingness, curiosity and openness

- Present Oriented
- Fosters Awareness
- Nurtures insight & wisdom
- Inherently self reflective
- Goal of developing compassion

## RADICAL INTROSPECTION

A practice of nonjudgmental, comprehensive, self reflection and inward looking for the purpose of facilitating better therapy.

- Introspective practice of the therapists is basis for all other therapeutic work
- Present oriented & responsive
- Requires an examination of one's own thoughts and feelings
- Inward looking: includes therapists' stories, histories intersecting identities, biases, behavioral patterns and relationship patterns, it is a 360 degree "looking."



# Other reflective practices

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- **Self Inquiry** (Ramana Maharshi) – a practice of using the self as a source of knowledge and information to learn more about one’s work and experiences
- **Deliberate Practice** (Ericsson & Lehmann, 1996) – “The individualized training activities specially designed by a coach or teacher to improve specific aspects of an individual’s performance through repetition and successive refinement.”
- **Reflective Practice** – (originally coined by Dewey in 1910) “The active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it.”
- **“The Work”** by Byron Katie (2003) – a self inquiry practice that utilizes 4 techniques:
  - Notice
  - Write
  - Question
  - Turn It Around

# Radical Introspective Framework



# Focus of Radical Introspective Practice

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- Values & Orientation
- Vulnerability
- Intimacy & Boundaries in the work
- Emotional Competence
- Imposter/Expert & self trust
- Exploring Identity
- Purpose & Intentions
- Self Care

## Radical introspection requires therapists to use essential therapist techniques on themselves



- **Exploration** - the therapist will have this experience for themselves through the inquiry required in the radical introspection process, thus enhancing their ability to use this skill
- **Reflection** - the process of responding to prompts, noticing the responses and the internal reactions to the responses requires self reflection
- **Tracking** the past success of clients requires therapist presence and attention; the radical introspection process is highly oriented towards developing presence with self and others
- **Accurate interpretations** require knowledge and also self trust on the part of the therapist, that they can confidently share observations, interpretations and receive feedback about those observations and interpretations. Radical introspection requires therapists to engage in this process with themselves first.
- **Facilitating** affect of the patient - as therapists grow in comfort with their emotional lives (as they are asked to do in this process), they can accept and create the space for others to explore and express their emotional lives as well
- **Attending** to the patient's experience - We can cultivate deeply meaningful presence with others, when we have practiced doing so for ourselves. Deep introspection requires compassionate, non judgmental presence with self.

# Radical introspection is exclusive to the development the person of the therapist.

This approach enhances the essential therapist characteristics and:

**Deepens self awareness of origin stories, values, motivations & goals**

**Clarifies therapist identity to aid in confidence building**

**Alerts therapist to blind spots to nurture respect for patients and enhance trustworthiness**

**Encourages therapists to recognize their interactions as cross cultural to foster openness, respect and honesty**

**Develops flexibility by creating more internal space to incorporate patient feedback and to adjust**

**Nurtures mindfulness, presence , acceptance & compassion to develop warmth and interest**

**Pushes therapists to engage with challenging aspects of the therapist dynamic: power and privilege, self disclosure, shame, triggers and challenging patients**

**Establishes intentional self care and work life balance practices as an ethical responsibility**

# Let's practice

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- What makes you the kind of therapist you are? Describe your approach in 3 words.
- How do you want your clients to experience you?
- What is most important for them to learn from you?

## The Necessary Nine – Introspective therapist traits:

- Dynamic
- Know how to create safety
- Authentic & Adept at self disclosure
- Emotionally competent and confident
- Recognizes intersectionality within themselves and others
- Inspires growth & curiosity
- Courageous
- Self trusting
- Collaborative & Empowering





Thank

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