

Organizing Experience Worksheet

Client's ID _____

Date _____

1. Bring fully to mind a client you work with but have a hard time staying emotionally connected to. Describe this person's relationship with you.

2. How do you experience this person's connections and disconnections?

_____ unavailable for connection, _____ quick to break connection, _____ unable to sustain connection, _____ gets me to break connection.

Describe briefly.

How are connections typically made and broken?

3. Why do you think this person has a hard time connecting and holding onto connections?

4. Common subjective concerns of this person are:

___ I feel very crazy, like falling apart or dying.

___ I worry I won't be able to find you if I need you.

___ If I can't hold on the way I need to, I'll die.

___ I am overwhelmed by what seems easy to you.

___ I need not to be pressured or rushed.

___ There must be time and space for my expressions.

___ I must have continuity and safety with you.

___ I need to hear, see, smell, and feel your presence.

___ Don't assume I'm connected when I'm not.

___ Please search for my sense of life inside.

___ Please be available or don't tantalize me.

___ I need to have a total-body experience.

___ I need you to be alive to me and my concerns.

___ Please respect my sense of time and space.

___ Don't expect me to have more ego than I do.

___ Show me in concrete ways how to hold onto you.

___ Please don't crush, kill, or abuse the child inside.

___ Don't agree to hold me if you intend to drop me.

___ Show me how to connect with myself and you.

___ (Other) _____

5. What kinds of expressions and symbols does the person use in regular self-expression that strike you as unusual, unique, or obsessive? What ongoing overconcern does the person have with things such as religion, food, love, relationships, work, children, illness, morals, judgments of others? How are these symbols and concerns used to connect, avoid, or rupture connections?

6. What kind of nonhuman imagery does the person use fairly regularly? How does the person experience mechanical, impersonal, uncontrollable, mystical, economic, political, legal, and/or supernatural forces or movements in the world that determine things? How are people and relationships experienced as powers, forces, devices, diseases, or trends to be dealt with, controlled, or avoided? How are things in the person's life experienced as governed by impersonal or inanimate forces, strange happenings, or persecutory signs? **How does the person use nonhuman imagery to connect and disconnect from people?**

7. What kinds of physical sensations, preoccupations, or symptoms are mentioned often? How are body parts, physical symptoms, and health fears in one way or another a frequent concern? This can include focus on organ functioning, weight gain and loss, food and substance use and abuse, or obsessive concern with exercise and health, digestion and evacuation, and mental and physical deterioration or disease and aging. **How are compulsive concerns with physical matters used by this person to achieve, thwart, and destroy connections?**

8. How is the person's orientation in time and space less than reliable and consistent? What kinds of regular or periodic confusions, lapses, distortions, disorientations, or inconsistencies occur? When and under what circumstances does the person seem less than reliably and safely grounded? **How do orientation issues involved in this person's life relate to her or his connections and disconnections?**

9. What other ways have you observed that this person uses to avoid, rupture, dilute, or cut short emotional connections?

10. Describe special moments when you and this person are clearly affectively connected? What do those moments look like in terms of body involvement? What contents or kinds of events allow these special connections to occur? How are these moments lost or destroyed? How does the person change or dilute the subject, focus, or emotional impact of such connections?

11. How does it seem this person uses “projective identification” or your “countertransference” response to achieve a minimizing, an avoidance, or a breaking off of contact? That is, in what ways is she or he using long-standing skills to push you away or alienate you emotionally? In what ways has this person skillfully ferreted out things in you that are easily mobilized and that can serve to disrupt the mutual emotional connection?

12. Forgetting “usual therapeutic technique,” what do you think you could do or say to get this person to hold on to these special moments of emotional connection with you for a little while longer? What would it take to get her or him to stay with you a little longer?

13. What do you think would happen if you could encourage the person to stay connected longer? Be specific. In both bodies? In the emotions of two? In the sense of connection?

14. How is deep transference terror likely to manifest itself? What about countertransference terror? How will the two of you handle it?

15. As you have been considering inviting this person into more intimate relating with you, what emotional reactions have you been having?

16. What body reactions have been occurring as you imagine getting closer to this person? What sorts of fears are arising for you and how are they manifest in various places in your body?

17. Why does this project seem like it just won't work? In what ways does it seem plausible?

18. What comes up for you now as you think of sharing these reactions with colleagues?

[This form is from Hedges, L. E., *Terrifying Transferences: Aftershocks of Childhood Trauma*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2000.]