

AEDP: Transformative Processes in Psychotherapy

**AEDP Harnesses Attachment & Affective
Neuroscience to Promote Accelerated Change in
Psychotherapy**

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The AEDP Institute
www.aedpinstitute.org

Healing Inexplicable Pain
AEDP Workshop – Columbia Psychosomatics Conference
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Fundamentals of AEDP

- **Healing Orientation** - Transformance– Healing from the Get- Go — Positive Somatic Affective Markers
- **Undoing Aloneness** - Attachment & Intersubjectivity. Safety, Connection, Dyadic Affect Regulation, Positive Bond,
- **Embodied Experience** - EXPERIENTIAL Work with the experience of: Emotion, Relationship, Receptive affective experiences, Healing, Transformation
- **Transformation** - Work with Transformational Experience Guided by a Phenomenology of the Transformational Process:– METATHERAPEUTIC PROCESSING
- **Emergence** - Privileging the Positive, The Good, the New, the Emergent

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Neuroplasticity

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Neuroplasticity

- *"The power to direct our attention has the power to shape the brain's firing patterns, as well as the power to shape the architecture of the brain itself"* (Siegel, 2010).
- *"Many tastes we think 'natural' are acquired through learning and become 'second nature' to us. We are unable to distinguish our 'second nature' from our 'original nature' because our neuroplastic brains, once rewired, develop a new nature, every bit as biological as our original"* (Doidge, 2007).

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Conditions that promote neuroplasticity

- **focused attention** (activates the nucleus basalis, which secretes acetylcholine, which strengthens synaptic connections)
- **emotional arousal**: need to work at the edge: safe but not too safe
- **novelty** (also stimulates growth of new neurons)
- **repetition, practice** of new experiences, skills
- **motivation**: when an organism is motivated to learn (drive to explore), the brain responds plastically
- **pleasure/reward** (dopamine and acetylcholine consolidate the changes just made) – manifested in positive affect and positive affective markers

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Dopamine in Neuroplasticity

- **dopamine and other neuromodulatory systems are necessary for lasting neural plasticity:** the role of motivational brain systems in memory formation and later behavior, particularly adaptive long-term memory formation appropriate to therapeutic change, is central
- **specific dopamine-mediated neurophysiological states,** (i.e., anticipated reward, accompanied by (i) activation of dopaminergic regions of midbrain together with the nucleus accumbens and hippocampus, (ii) low levels of anxiety and physiological arousal, (iii) surprise, and (iv) mnemonic encoding shifts from temporal lobe cortex to hippocampus) **predict adaptive long-term memory formation appropriate to therapeutic change.**

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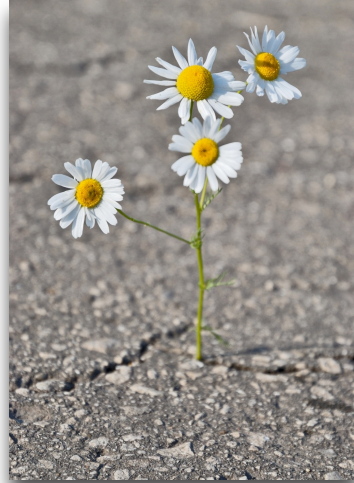
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Fundamentals of AEDP

A Healing Orientation

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What is *transformance*?

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Transformance

- ***"People have a fundamental need for transformation. We are wired for growth and healing. And we are wired for self-righting, and resuming impeded growth. We have a need for the expansion and liberation of the self, the letting down of defensive barriers, and the dismantling of the false self. We are shaped by a deep desire to be known, seen, and recognized as we strive to come into contact with parts of ourselves that are frozen"***

Fosha, 2008

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Transformance neuroplasticity in action

- Wired deep within our brains we find innate dispositional tendencies reflecting a wired-in drive toward growth, learning, healing, and self-righting. They are there for the activating and press toward expression when circumstances are right. Unlike the conservative motivational strivings under the aegis of resistance, which consume and drain psychic energy, transformance-based motivational strivings, when actualized, are energizing and vitalizing.
- Positive markers – vitality affects – energy and vitality
- Moment to-moment
- Always present as dispositional tendencies
- Always in balance with the forces of resistance

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The AEDP Formula: Emotion science + relationship science + transformation science = AEDP

- **Relationship Science**
 - Attachment
 - Intersubjectivity
 - Social engagement
 - Empathy
 - Compassion
 - Attunement, Repair
 - Resonance
- **Emotion science**
 - Darwin
 - William James
 - Damasio, Panksepp
- **Transformation Science**
 - Emotion
 - Resonance, moments of meeting
 - Neuroplasticity
 - Emergence
 - Love
 - Seeking system: motivation, zest
 - Exploration
 - Positive Emotion: Broaden & Build

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Porges: The Features of Safety

- *“Connectedness is a biological imperative” (Porges, in press)*
- *“A bias on the features of danger neglects the profound sensitivity that humans have to features of safety and how exposure to these features can promote development and foster resilience... Thus, it is not merely the removal of features of danger, but the active presentation of features of safety that our nervous system craves.” (Porges, 2015)*
- *“The neuroception of familiar individuals and individuals with appropriately prosodic voices and warm, expressive faces translates into a social interaction promoting a sense of safety” (Porges, 2011).*

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AEDP's Therapeutic Stance: Undoing Aloneness

- be a transference detective,
- be kind, be real, be present, be generous, be with
- be tender and own lapses with sincerity
- undo the patient's aloneness in the face of overwhelming emotional experience
- make use of regulating power of gaze, attuned eye contact
- go beyond mirroring, help, engage in dyadic affect regulation
- foster positively toned interactions
- repair negatively toned interactions
- make the implicit explicit, and make the explicit experiential
- stay with it and stay with me: 30 sec or more needed for new synaptic connection
- work to promote the patient's felt sense of existing in the heart and mind of the other, i.e., in your heart and mind

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UNDOING ALONENESS

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UNDOING ALONENESS: Change for the better happens in the presence of a caring, wiser attachment figure

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Undoing Aloneness:
Love & care in the face of distress



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RESONANCE



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Allan Schore: Positive Affects of Resonance Are Required for Optimal Brain Growth

- The maintenance of positive affective states associated with dyadic experiences of affective resonance has been shown to be crucial to optimal neurobiological development. "The baby's brain is not only affected by these interactions, its growth literally requires brain-brain interactions and occurs in the context of a positive relationship between mother and infant" (Schore, 1996, p. 62).
- "The mother's face is triggering high levels of endogenous opiates in the child's growing brain. These endorphins ... act directly on subcortical reward centers of the infant's brain" (Schore, 1996, p. 63).
- The child is motivated to enter into such a "reciprocal reward system" because "euphoric states are perhaps the most appetitively compelling experiences available to life forms as so far evolved" (Schwartz, 1990, p. 125, quoted in Schore, 1996, p. 62).

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Fundamentals of AEDP

Experience, Experience, Experience

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At its essence, AEDP is about *experience*

- "There is a distinct physical sensation of change, which you recognize once you experienced it. We call it a body shift. When people have this even once, they no longer helplessly wonder for years whether they are changing or not. Now they can be their own judges of that" (Gendlin, 1981, p. 7)
- "Love— like taking a deep breath or eating an orange when you're depleted and thirsty— not only feels great but is also life-giving, an indispensable source of energy, sustenance, and health." (Frederickson)

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“the sense of what is wrong carries with it, inseparably, a sense of direction toward what is right”

- The change process we have discovered is natural to the body, and it feels that way in the body. The bad feeling is the body knowing and pushing toward what good would be. Every bad feeling is potential energy toward a more right way of being if you give it space to move toward its rightness. It knows the direction. It knows this just as surely as you know which way to move a crooked picture. If the crookedness is pronounced enough for you to notice it at all, there is absolutely no chance that you will move the picture in the wrong direction and make it still more crooked while mistaking that for straight. *The sense of what is wrong carries with it, inseparably, a sense of the direction toward what is right*” (Gendlin, 1981, p. 76)

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the patient needs to have an experience...

- The patient needs to have an experience, a new experience. And that experience should be good.
- From the first moment of the first contact, and throughout the treatment thereafter, the aim and method of AEDP is the provision, facilitation, and processing of such experiences.
- AEDP theory, stance and technique are oriented to insure that the experience is good. AEDP achieves its aim through entraining and harnessing the healing power of naturally occurring affective change processes, such as emotion, dyadic affect coordination, empathic reflection, somatic experiencing, and metatherapeutic processing

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Emotions as transformational agents

- "Emotional occasions ... are extremely potent in precipitating mental rearrangements. the sudden and explosive ways in which love, jealousy, guilt, fear, remorse or anger can seize upon one are known to everybody. hope happiness, security, resolve.... can be equally explosive. and emotions that come in this explosive way seldom leave things as they found them" (William James, 1902, p. 198).
- "Through transformation, our nervous system regains its capacity for self regulation. Our emotions begin to lift us up rather than bring us down. They propel us into the exhilarating ability to soar and fly, giving us a more complete view of our place in nature" (Peter Levine, 1997, p. 193).

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Pat Ogden on New, Empowering Physical Actions

- **"The regulatory boundaries of the window of tolerance are challenged and expanded in psychotherapy as patients execute new, empowering physical actions, impossible during an actual traumatic event, or perform previously ineffective relational actions that foster attachment, connection and interpersonal resonance, or engage the variety of actions that encourage and reflect positive affect. Core affects are supported by the elaboration of corresponding physical actions"**

Ogden, 2009

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Fundamentals of AEDP

Privileging the Positive

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AEDP privileges the positive



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The change process feels good

- “Another major discovery is that the process of actually changing feels good. Effective working on one’s problems is not self torture. The change process we have discovered is natural to the body, and it feels that way in the body. The crucial move goes beneath the usual painful places to a bodily sensing that is at first unclear. The experience of something emerging from there feels like a relief and a coming alive..... One of the chief new principles is that the change process feels good” (Gendlin, 1981, p. 8).

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Privileging the Positive Broaden & Build, Promote Thrival

- **Why focus on positive affects & positive affective interactions** (Willie Suttin)
- **Vitality & energy:** fuel for life
- **Positive affective interactions**
 - Constituents of secure attachment (Schoore, Panksepp)
 - Contributors to resilience (Tronick, Trevarthen)
 - Quality of relationship over time (Frederickson, Gable, Algoe)
- **Positive affects: Flourishing** (Frederickson)
- **Neural energy** (Panksepp): The Seeking System
- **Motivation to learn, explore:** Zest
 - “We shall not cease from exploration” T. S. Eliot
 - Memory consolidation (Adcock, LaBar)

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Fundamentals of AEDP

Experiential Work with Transformational Experience

Metatherapeutic Processing

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Damasio:

Human emotion is not just about...

- “Human emotion is not just about sexual pleasures or fear of snakes. It is also about the horror of witnessing suffering and the satisfaction of seeing justice served; about our delight at the sensuous smile of Jeanne Moreau or the thick beauty of words and ideas in Shakespeare’s verse; about the world weary voice of Fischer-Dieskau singing *Bach’s Ich habe genug* and the simultaneously earthly and otherworldly phrasing of Maria Joao Pires playing any Mozart, any Schubert; and about the harmony that Einstein sought in the structure of an equation.” (Damasio, 1999, p. 35-6)

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**At its essence,
AEDP is about privileging
transformation and the vitality affects
that accompany it**

- At its essence, **AEDP** is about privileging transformation, MORE SPECIFICALLY, the *experience of transformation* and the sense of aliveness that marks it
- The explicit focus on the *experience* of transformation activates a transformational process
- Metaprocessing is the experiential processing of transformational experience, constituted of alternating waves of experience and reflection

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**Metaprocessing & Pleasure:
The processing of transformational experience
& the positive affect associated with it**



- "When the mind regards itself and its own power of activity, it feels *pleasure*: and that *pleasure* is greater in proportion to the distinctness wherewith it conceives itself and its own power of activity"

Spinoza

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Transformation, Positive Affects & Positive Interactions

- **Transformation:** Positive affects, positive interactions and the process of healing transformation are organically intertwined.
- **Resilience and Brain Growth:** Resilience and Brain Growth: Positive, attuned, dyadic interactions are the constituents of healthy, secure attachments and the correlates of neurochemical environments conducive to optimal brain growth (Panksepp, 2001; Schore, 2001; Trevarthen, 2001)
- **Flourishing, Well being:** Positive affects are the constituent phenomena of health, resilience, mental health, and well-being (Fredrickson)
- **Metaprocessing:** AEDP work has revealed that the transformational process is accompanied moment-to-moment by positive somatic/ affective markers (Fosha, 2004; Fosha & Yeung, 2006; Russell & Fosha, 2008; Yeung & Cheung, 2008).

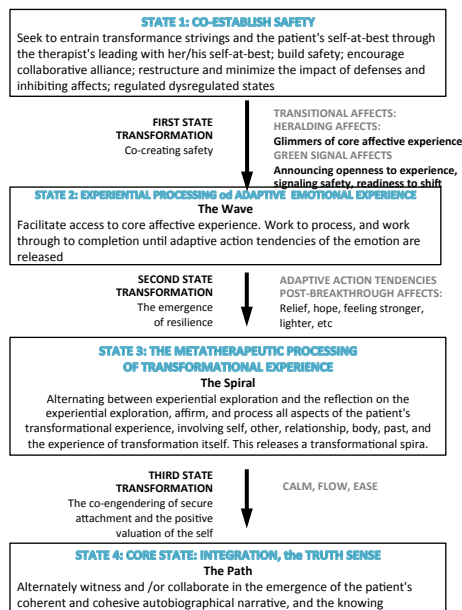
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SAFETY, EXPERIENCE, AFFIRMATION, INTEGRATION

The 4 States and 3 State Transformations of the Transformational Process in AEDP



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The Arc of Transformation

- Through a transformational process rooted in emotional experience, suffering can morph into flourishing, contraction can be motivationally reversed, and a re-orientation toward growth can be brought about.
- An arc where a psychoevolutionary perspective at one end and aesthetics, spirituality, and the quest for personal truth at the other are shown to be seamlessly linked through the bodily rooted experience of emotion processed to completion
- This arc is created by exploring how affective experiences associated with the operation of biologically-based wired-in emotional and relational processes naturally culminate in deeply therapeutic experiences of aliveness, hope, faith, clarity, agency, simplicity, compassion, truth, self, and beauty I might add
- Accessing processes mediated low down in our mammalian brain, we become able to soar to the greatest heights and plumb the greatest depths.

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The Credo of AEDP the magnificent seven

- 1. **Healing from the Get-Go**; Transformance Detection guided by positive somatic affective markers
- 2. **Attachment-Based Emotionally-Engaged Stance**: safety-engendering, affect-facilitating, attuned and emotionally engaged; validation, affirmation, explicit empathy. NOT neutral
- 3. **Undoing Aloneness**, co-creating safety and conditions for exploration
 - Dyadic affect exploration
 - Secure base from which to launch exploration
 - Intersubjective delight

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The Credo of AEDP the magnificent seven (cont'd)

4. Minimize Defenses

- Work with defenses
- Regulate the inhibitory affects (anxiety, shame, etc)
- Amplify glimmers of adaptive experience
- Seek specificity, the concrete example

- 5. Experiential Work with Emotional Experience:** i.e., the “negative emotions” associated with trauma and emotional suffering,
- Affective change processes
 - Positive somatic affective markers
 - Process to completion, where completion is defined as the affective shift from a negative valence to a positive valence
 - Release of adaptive action tendencies and clarity about the core needs of the Self

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The Credo of AEDP the magnificent seven (cont'd)

- 6. Experiential Work with Transformational Experience** and the transformational affects, i.e., the positive affects associated with change for the better
- Metatherapeutic processing
 - Transformational affects, always positive
 - Spiraling or cascading transformations
 - Culminates in core state, an integrative state; its somatic marker is the felt sense of truth

7. Integration, Privileging Emergence & the Co-Construction of New Meaning

- The sense of existing in the heart and mind of the other as oneself
- The construction of a new autobiographical narrative

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State 1: Transformance Detection & Co-Creation of Safety

Therapist as safety-engendering other

Goals of State 1 Work:

Transformance, Safety, Access Somatically-Based Experience

1. Get **transformance** on board
2. Co-construct **safety**
3. Focus in on **somatically-based emotional experience**
4. **Minimize inhibitory impact of defenses** to minimize their impact (including successful bypassing of them)
5. **Minimize impact of inhibitory affects** (anxiety, shame, guilt) t minimize their inhibitory impact
6. **Heighten glimmers of core affect**

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State 2: Emotion Processing

Therapist as affect facilitating other

- Dyadic affect regulation
- Work with one affective change process at a time sp. Categorical emotions (biggest bang for the buck)
- Accessing, deepening, processing through and “completing” a wave of core affective experience til there is a shift from a negative valence (feared, painful overwhelming) to a positive valence – and the adaptive action tendencies, positive motivation for change (Adcock) and clarity about implications for self and action are released

2nd state transformation

- Oxytocin AND dopamine
- The adaptive action tendencies, positive motivation for change (Adcock) and clarity about implications for self and action are released

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State 2: Emotion Processing Therapist as affect facilitating other

Goals of State 2 Work:

Drop down, Work Through, Process to Completion

1. **Focus** in on specific emotion (or affective change process)
2. **Drop down:** Access somatically based emotional experience
– “lose your mind and find your senses” (Fritz Perls)
3. **Dyadically Regulate; Deepen**
4. **Process Emotion** and concomitant experiences associated with it
5. **“Complete”** Emotional Sequence: Work toward an affective shift from a negative valence to a positive valence til *adaptive action tendencies* and/or *post-breakthrough affects* are released

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State 3: METAPROCESSING: The Processing of Transformational Experience Therapist as true other, transformational other

- The transformational affects: a new set of categorical affects,
- Gratitude, receptivity to gratitude and other feelings: oxytocin,
- Also the excitement of dopamine and exploration: the seeking system, motivation (Panksepp, Adcock)
- Emergence, the new

3rd State Transformation

- “Upward spirals of mutual responsiveness, promoting the quality of the relationship over time” (Algoe & Way, 2014)
- Flourishing

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State 3: METAPROCESSING:**The Processing of Transformational Experience
Therapist as true other, transformational other****Goals of State 3 Work: "What's it Like?"**

Process transformational Experience & the Positive Affects associated with it: keep doing it

1. **Identify emergent specific transformational affect**, i.e., positive affect associated with transformational experience
2. **Experientially explore**
3. **Reflect on Experience**
4. **Focus on new emergent transformational affect** and concomitant experiences associated with it, as previous transformational affect becomes a launching pad (or platform) for emergence of new affect
5. **Repeat with each emergent transformational affect, alternating between experience and reflection**

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State 4: Core State**I/Thou Relating****Therapist as True Other, Witnessing Other**

- Somatic marker: the felt sense of **truth**
- **Clarity**
- **Creativity**
- **Compassion and self compassion**
- **Generosity**
- **Wisdom**
- **Consolidation** of therapeutic work
- **Coherent and cohesive autobiographical narrative**

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State 4: Core State
I/Thou Relating
Therapist as True Other, Witnessing Other

Goals of State 4 Work:
 Integration, New Meaning, New Experience

1. **Integration**
2. **Understanding**
3. **New meaning, New truth**
4. **Increasingly “coherent and cohesive autobiographical narrative” (Mary Main)**
5. **New experience of Self: “This is me”**

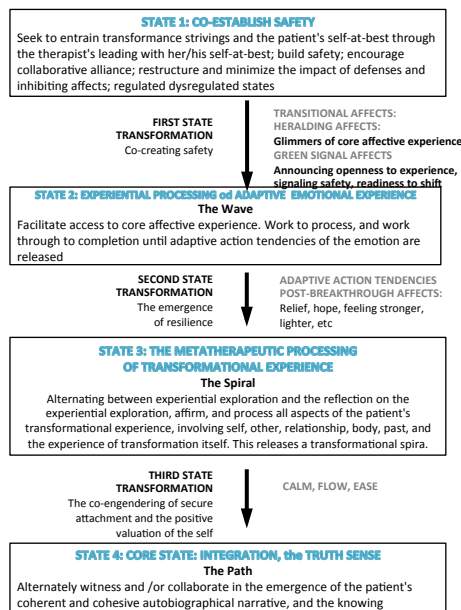
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SAFETY, EXPERIENCE, AFFIRMATION, INTEGRATION

The 4 States and 3 State Transformations of the Transformational Process in AEDP



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IN CONCLUSION

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Safety, Experience, Affirmation, Integration

1. **Co-Create Safety, Detect** Transformance
 - Undo aloneness & minimize barriers to somatically based experience
2. **Facilitate and Process** Emotional Experience **(and the Experience of other Affective Change Processes)**
 - Process and work through til release of adaptive action tendencies
3. **Affirm Transformation &** Process Transformational Experience
 - Metatherapeutic Processing
4. **Promote & Foster** Reflection & Integration, New Meaning
 - Core State: the sense of truth

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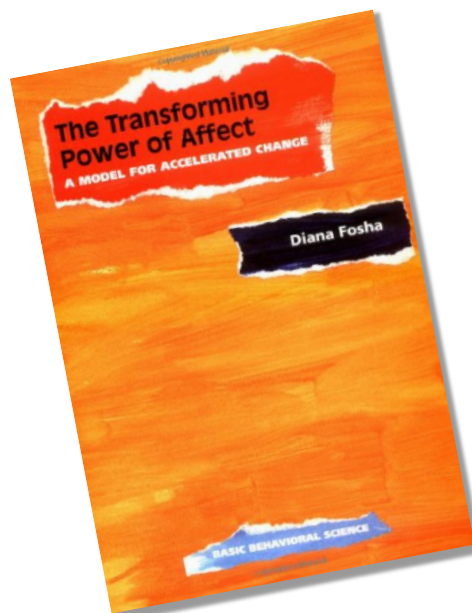
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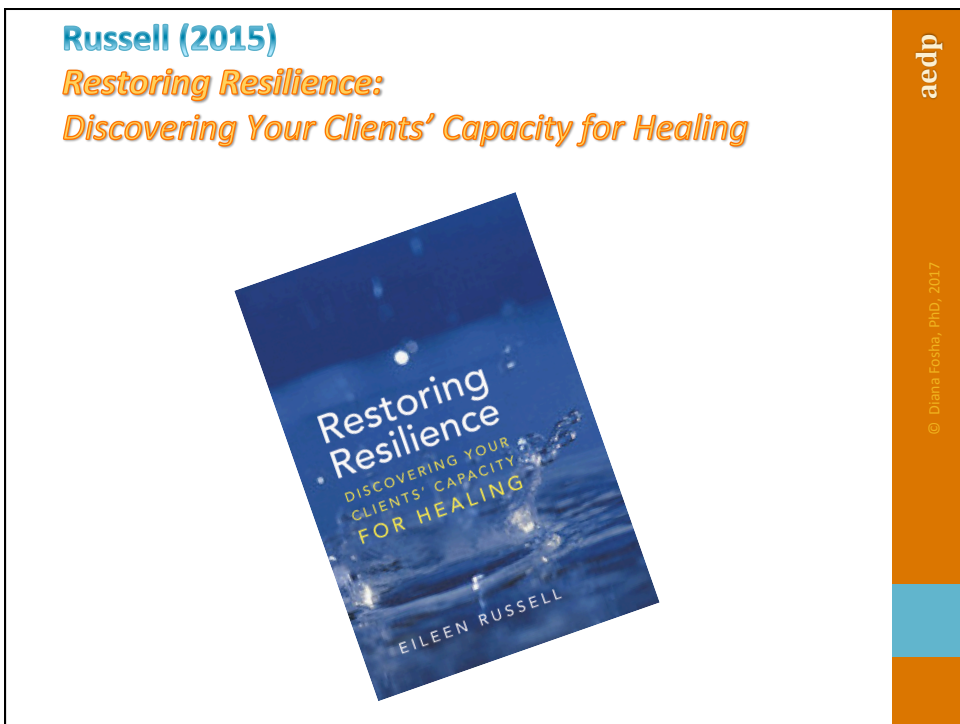
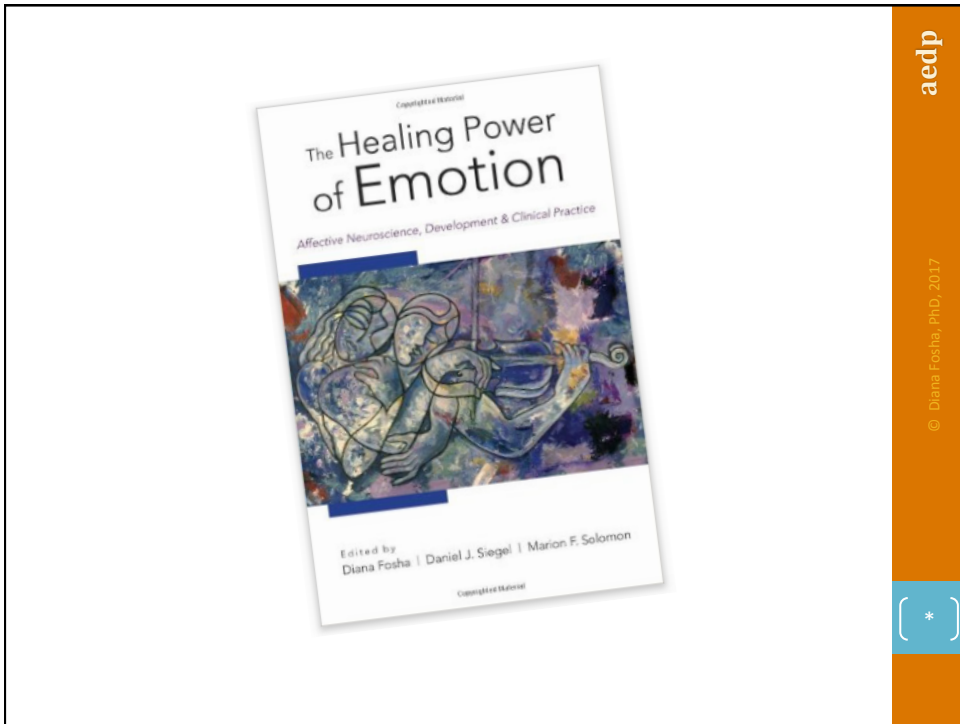
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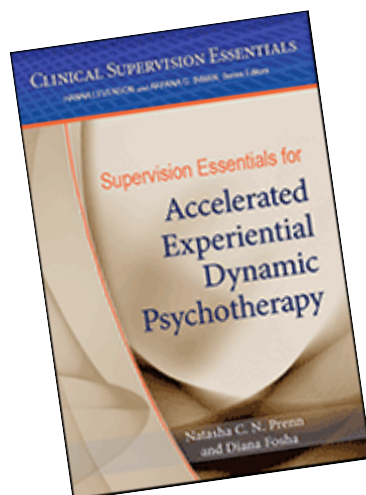
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Prenn & Fosha (2016)

Supervision Essentials for Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy



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