

Title: Therapeutic use of self: A nationwide survey of practitioners' attitudes and experiences

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Major Finding: Therapists placed high importance on the therapeutic relationship and use of self but reported inadequate knowledge in the field and insufficient training in these areas.

Participants:

- 568 practicing occupational therapists who were also members of AOTA.
 - 92% female; mean age=42.
 - 77% with more than 5 years of practice; 72% with a bachelor's degree in occupational therapy.
 - 91% reported client population with non-psychiatric primary diagnoses.
 - 34% worked in inpatient settings, 28% in outpatient, 23% in school settings.

Method: Participants were mailed a survey questionnaire on therapeutic use of self that had been pilot tested and revised.

Analysis: Data was analyzed using SPSS. Cronbach's alpha, Pearson's coefficient correlations, t-tests, ANOVAs, and Bonferroni post hoc tests were used to explore relationships between study variables.

Findings:

- Most therapists considered therapeutic use of self the most important skill in occupational therapy practice and critical to their clinical reasoning.
- Most participants reported that the field does not possess sufficient knowledge about use of self and the therapeutic relationship, and half felt insufficiently educated in use of self upon graduation.
- Therapists who more highly valued and had more training in therapeutic use of self were more likely to report interpersonal difficulties with clients and to feel more positive regard toward their clients.

Conclusion: Therapists find therapeutic use of self and the therapeutic relationship to be critically important and they value and care for their clients' well-being. Therapists report inadequate knowledge within the field of occupational therapy and training in these areas.

Implications for future research: Future research should explore the effect of client emotions and behaviors on therapy processes and outcomes and how therapists can effectively manage them. Future research is needed to explore the degree of concern for clients that is related to a positive therapeutic relationship. Additional psychometric studies are also needed for establishing other aspects of the validity and reliability of the scales used.

Evidence- based practice implications:

- **Occupational therapy education and research should focus more on the therapeutic relationship and therapeutic use of self.**
- **Therapists may need further training in therapeutic use of self and the therapeutic relationship after graduating from occupational therapy school.**

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