

Clinical RFT: Fostering a Flexible Sense of Self

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Clinical interventions

RFT principles

Building a Flexible Sense of Self: Self-as-Process skills

Stabilize the perspective

Evoke observation of psychological experiences in the present (I-HERE-NOW)

- How do you feel now? Do you feel like you are _____ just now?

Evoke observation of changes and variety of experiences from the present (I-HERE-NOW)

- Is this the same or different now? Do you notice changes?

Change the perspective

Evoke observation of experiences across a variety of contexts (times, situations)

- How do you feel when you are at home? How about when you are with your friends?

Evoke observation of changes and variety of experiences

- Are you the same in these different situations? At these different moments? Do you notice variations? Changes?

Evoke observation of the same experience from different perspectives

- One year ago, how did you imagine that you would be like today? Tomorrow, remembering how you feel right now, what will you be thinking? If you were me and you heard what you are saying right now, what would you think/feel?

Evoke observation of the transformed experience

- When you look at this from another perspective, is this sensation the same? Different? Do you see yourself the same way when you take these different perspectives?

Self as Process Practice:

Key Observations:

What worked well:

Areas for improvement:

I have questions about:

Building a Flexible Sense of Self: Self-as-Perspective skills

First evoke observation of changes and variety of experiences (Self as Process):

Perspective stays still to observe different experiences

- How do you feel now? Do you feel like you are _____ just now?

Perspective changes to observe different experiences

- Is this the same or different now? Do you notice changes?

Perspective changes on the same experience to observe transformation of the experience

- One year ago, what did you imagine you would be like today? Tomorrow, remembering how you feel right now, what do you think you'll be thinking? If you were me and you heard what you are saying right now, what would you think?

Then evoke observation of the common perspective across the experiences:

Equivalence framing:

- What remains the same? What doesn't change?

Self-as-Perspective Practice:

Key Observations:

What worked well:

Areas for improvement:

I have questions about:

Building a Flexible Sense of Self: Self-as-Context Skills

Establish hierarchical relations through metaphorical speech:

Container/content, Context/experiences, Whole/parts

- What if you were like the sky and your thoughts and sensations were like the weather?

Establish relations of distinction between the self and the experiences:

Inclusion versus equivalence

- Self *has* experiences vs. Self *is* experiences (you have the thought that...)

Redirect self-evaluations toward the experiences:

- What did you do that you found horrible? What kind of sensations do you feel when you are crushed?

Self-as-Context Practice:

Key Observations:

What worked well:

Areas for improvement:

I have questions about:

Building a Flexible Sense of Self: Self-as-Interaction skills

Notice the impact of contextual variables

- Evoke observation of behavioral sequence (emphasis on the impact of context): What do you think lead you to act this way?
- Evoke observation of another's perspective on oneself: If you were me, what would you think caused your behavior?
- Evoke imagining another in the same context: Imagine that the person you love the most acted this way, what would you say would be the cause of this behavior?

Notice the impact of behaviors

- Evoke observation of behavioral sequence (emphasis on the impact of behaviors): What happens when you do _____? How do you manage to do _____? Is it hard? How do you do to make it anyway?

Self-as-Interaction Practice:

Key Observations:

What worked well:

Areas for improvement:

I have questions about:

How to Continue Improving

Alas, doing something again and again does not improve performance. Practice must be deliberate, with specific learning objectives, repeated practice, and formative feedback.

Recipe for Deliberate Practice:

1. Choose a specific learning objective. One at a time works best.
 - Formulate a complete functional description of your objective: “In (specific context) I will do (specific behavior) in order to (desired outcome)”
2. Set a practice schedule.
 - Remind yourself of #1 and #3 before every practice (this is the deliberate part)
3. Track your performance goals.
 - Think SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound
 - How will you know if you improve? What will mastery look like?
4. Get feedback every time you practice.
 - Track your own performance in a systematic way (quick self-ratings are fine)
 - Client measures (e.g., if you’re working on your skills to target defusion, track client defusion measures)
 - Peer or expert observation (audio, video, live) with specific feedback

Expert Practice Tips:

- Practice the same scenario again and again. Notice subtle differences. Notice what remains the same. Where do your responses seem stuck? Where do you show signs of flexibility?
- If you don’t know what the “right” thing is to do, go with your first response (even if you know it to be “wrong”) and track what works and what doesn’t work. Go back to the point that didn’t work and try something different. Track what worked and what didn’t. Compare to the first attempt. Repeat.

Potential Clinical Targets for Deliberate Practice of Self Skills:

- Memories, thoughts, emotions, sensations experienced as a threat
- Distress over role changes, life transitions, body changes, ability changes
- Unstable or no sense of self
- Over-identification with a particular identity or role
- Shame, self-criticism, hopelessness, low sense of self-efficacy

My Deliberate Practice Plan

What skill will I work on? In what situations? How often?

How will I measure my skill development? How often will I measure my skill development?

How will I track the impact of my skill development? Clients? Peers? Experts?

Where information or resources do I have (or need) to support my skill development?

What opportunities do I have to practice and receive formative feedback on this skill?

RESOURCES for learning more about RFT

Clinical Consultation on Applying RFT Principles in Psychotherapy

Individual or Small Group Consultation available by phone or Skype

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RFT Clinical Training Courses with Matthieu Villatte

Using Relational Frame Theory in Experiential Practice (1 CEU)

On-Demand course that will play with slides and synchronized audio in your browser

<https://practiceground.org/packages/view/44>

Mastering the Language of Therapy: Strengthening Your Clinical Practice with RFT (12 CEU)

Live, interactive web-based course. Information and registration at www.practiceground.org

US Pacific: 8 Tuesdays beginning October 1, 12pm-1:30pm

Bibliography

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- Törneke, N. (2010). *Learning RFT: An introduction to relational frame theory and its clinical applications*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
- McHugh, L., & Stewart, I. (2012). *The self and perspective taking: Contributions and applications from modern behavioral science*. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications.
- Dymond, S. & Roche, B. (2013). *Advances in Relational Frame Theory: Research and applications*. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications.
- Villatte, M., Villatte, J., & Hayes, S. C. (expected 2014) *The language of psychotherapy: Strengthening your clinical practice with Relational Frame Theory*. New York: Guilford Publications.

Web resources

- RFT presentation: <http://contextualpsychology.org/rft>
- RFT tutorial : http://contextualpsychology.org/rft_tutorial
- RFT ACBS SIG: http://contextualpsychology.org/rft_sig_information
- RFT ACBS listserv: http://contextualpsychology.org/emailing_lists#RFT
- RFT facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/165048130196121/>
- RFT IRAP research: <http://irapresearch.org/>
- Hundreds of papers on RFT: <http://contextualpsychology.org/publications>