

### **Mirroring, Empathy and Interpretation**

After reading the most recent blurb on nontraditional supervision, a member of the group wanted further clarification on the difference between empathy and mirroring. When I am empathic, I communicate an understanding that I see the patient accurately. Hopefully, they will feel seen and understood by the interaction. It is organized and somewhat cognitive. On the other hand, mirroring is a closer form of contact. I feel in my body as the patient does. The patient looks sad and if I can take the patient in, I too feel sad in my body. This becomes a way of our mutual joining. We are sharing bodily vibrations with each other. When a baby is in distress, you do not try to say that you understand they are upset. You voice pain as sadness that they are uncomfortable. You owe and feel deeply their sadness and pain and it becomes part of your own body that they can take a picture of. You mirror what is inside of them. It is less cognitive and much more soul to soul contact. It is basically very non-intellectual and very body oriented.

Interpretation calls for interventions that integrate the various parts of the patient's history, defenses and current function. It is cognitive and structured and often clarifies the source of anxiety.