

Working with Zoom

Therapists report a sense of exhaustion and fatigue after working a full day on Zoom. They complain about the enormous difference between body to body contact as contrasted to relating only to the patient's face. In our Zoom session interaction, there are additional problems. Only one person can speak at a time. There are frequent interruptions due to the disconnection in network contact. Coming to group supervision is no longer a relief or a source of pleasure, and it becomes just one more laborious challenge.

I have observed that the technique constantly pushes for intellectual connections with the presenting patient. There is a tremendous push to understand what is going on with the presenting therapist. Some of the mechanical problems, we can work out. If everyone shuts off the connection and then returns, the communication process is improved. I now must raise my hand if I am to speak. Yet, in spite of these modifications, working in group supervision is not what it used to be.

I now encourage members to give up trying to understand their particular patients, but instead to try to just be present. Feel your sense of being in your body. If necessary, I say "take deep breaths and follow your energy as it moves to different parts of your body." Look at the part that is frozen, and ask it what prevents itself from being alive. Don't go back to your head, but allow yourself to have empty spaces into how your body communicates an affect, or even a sensation or thought. Don't try to be linear, but allow the various sensations to collect themselves in their own particular way. In other words, don't go for too early a closure. The field that hopefully arises moves past one's particular body boundary, and takes the person to another level of consciousness. The energy level goes past the body and sensorimotor stimulation. The stimulation is but one piece of working on a meditative level in a therapeutic dialogue.

When we cannot establish an energy connection with our patients, we can only be present and be available as we constantly attempt to take the patient or presenter into our own level of consciousness. Sometimes we can mirror what we experience as a way of offering a model of communication that most likely did not exist in our history. I make a very definite distinction between mirroring and resonance versus empathy. The latter is far more distant and separate. In the former we are joining two levels of energy as both one and separate. It has its own rhythm and cadence. I want to emphasize that this process is

a two person affair. When we give up conscious control, there then arises a sense of freedom and pleasure in constantly trying to figure out what is going on. We will discover what is going on through an experience, rather than through insight or understanding. Not all patients need this approach, as rarely does one way of working apply to everybody. In instances where this is a good deal of object constancy, pulling things together can be experienced through interpretations or insight, and that experience is very healing. Offering a cognitive outline to some traumatic patients helps in offering a boundary and a sense of safety. The use of transitional objects can sometimes be more effective than a face to face interaction.

I encourage people who use the Zoom to liberate themselves from working so hard, and to enjoy the pleasure and freedom. I encourage everyone to work on a dual level of consciousness. On one level, we dialogue on a non-verbal, energetic connection. On another, we check out our experience against a clinical framework. One helps to balance the other. Let's see what happens when we try to push ourselves to another way of presenting our cases. This approach places psychoanalysis in a new key. History is explored in a direct experience with the other. There is emphasis on integrating the unconscious with the conscious, or in other words, with the implicit and explicit connections. Members of the group are encouraged to offer their helpful recommendations as to what is going on. Their sharing of their inner experience becomes the cornerstone for group cohesion, safety, and deep communication.