

Therapists have to Explore their Own Cognitive Distortions Too



There is a sensitivity required in managing and acting on intuition. It is true that memory may be distorted, and that intuitions are sometimes “clouded by mood, perception or preconceived theories”--this is the nature of our minds. These preconceived theories are core beliefs or schemas, which are actually the lens through which we view the world, ourselves, and others. Schema Therapy tells us that dysfunctional schemas develop when basic needs in childhood are unmet. These needs are mostly attachment-based and include the need for: (1) safety and stability, (2) security and love, (3) a sense of competence and autonomy, (4) expressing emotions, (5) controlling and managing emotions and behavior, and (6) spontaneity and play.

The schemas that develop when there is adversity or deprivation are broad and pervasive themes that are elaborated throughout a person's life course. So, in addition to understanding and working with the beliefs and schemas of a client, one has to be cognizant of one's own as well (as a therapist). This helps a person develop intuition that is useful and helpful instead of guiding one along the wrong path. This is why therapists are always advised to engage in self-reflection, which enables us to open our perspectives, prevent that our judgment is clouded by our own cognitive distortions, and better connect with clients as a result.