What we know about psychotherapy

- Psychotherapy is effective
- Demonstrated in RCTs and in practice
- As effective as medications
- Longer lasting, fewer side effects, less resistant to additional courses
- What makes psychotherapy work?
- Did we evolve to benefit from psychotherapy?

Healing in an social context

- Ants do it! (and bees)
- Facial Expression of Pain
- Human healing practices

The Social Brain

- We learned NOT to do this
- Classical conditioning?
- Vicarious learning?
- Evolved to avoid electrical sockets?
- Verbal persuasion with trusted others!
So, how does it work?

REAL RELATIONSHIP
EXPECTATIONS
ACTIONS
THERAPISTS

Risks for mortality

Lack of Exercise

Pollution

Smoking

Loneliness

"Then there is the just-as-serious issue of being believed and supported by who you choose to tell. Sometimes people don’t believe you. Sometimes they have difficulty truly understanding what you are trying to tell them. Both Willoughby and I raised our cases with clergy. Both of us had a hard time getting them to fully address the abuse taking place."

"It wasn’t until I spoke to a professional counselor that I was met with understanding."

Placebos– The amazing influence of the mind

Nothing works better!

For pain, Parkinson’s disease, irritable bowel syndrome, depression, anxiety, fitness, taste, athletic performance...
Fitness (Crum et al. 2007)

- Randomly assigned
- Given information… or not
- No differences in activity in 4 weeks
- Informed group decreased
  - Weight
  - Blood pressure
  - Body mass index
  - Waist to hip ratio

“This is good exercise” Versus

No information

Effects of relationship in placebo (Kaptchuk et al., 2008)

- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Acupuncture Placebo
- Three conditions
  - Wait list (no placebo)
  - Limited interaction—<5 minutes
  - Augmented interaction—warm, empathic, caring, but no intervention

Results…

So, how does it work?

- REAL RELATIONSHIP
- EXPECTATIONS
- ACTIONS
- THERAPISTS

Evidence is clear….

- Treatments with a focus on client’s problems are more effective than unstructured treatments
- Attribution of progress to one’s hard work = less relapse than
- Attribution of progress to external source = greater relapse
- Key: Belief that hard work is beneficial

SET GOAL.
MAKE PLAN.
GET TO WORK.
STICK TO IT.
REACH GOAL.
So, how does it work?

REAL RELATIONSHIP
EXPECTATIONS
ACTIONS
THERAPISTS

Therapists – the forgotten factor

- Definition: Some therapists consistently attain better outcomes than other therapists
- Not due to contribution of patients
- Identify the best therapist....

Illustration: therapist effects
(Saxon, Firth, & Barkham, 2017)

Recovery Rates for Best and Worst therapists

Multiple Pathways
REAL RELATIONSHIP
EXPECTATIONS
ACTIONS
THERAPISTS
Thank You

Bruce E. Wampold, Ph.D., ABPP
Chief Scientist Theravee

Deliberate Practice for Therapists
Better Outcomes For Clients

Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin
Director, Research Institute, Modum Bad Psychiatric Center, Vikersund Norway