

Table 1. *Domains and General and Typical Categories*

Role of Empathy in Therapy

Empathy is necessary and important to therapy success	General
Allows for connection and understanding of a client	Typical

Levels of Empathy

There are different levels of empathy experienced by a therapist	General
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Manifestation of Problematic Empathy

Experienced heightened emotional reactions/awareness of client	Typical
Therapist feels less engaged and therapy becomes slower	Typical

Impact of Problematic Empathy on Therapy

Prevents effective therapy	Typical
Therapist and client could become too familiar and close	Typical
Client experiences negative emotions or feels misunderstood in therapy	Typical
Interferes with the therapeutic relationship	Typical

Specific Case of Lack of Empathy

Demographics

Female clients	Typical
White clients	Typical
Young/college age	Typical

Target Issues of Client

Interpersonal problems	Typical
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Timeframe Working with Client

Short term, under 1 year	Typical
Recognition of Problematic Empathy	
Felt uncomfortable and experienced a dislike of the client	Typical
Specific issues presented by a client caused therapist to react	Typical
In-session Strategies to Manage Problematic Empathy	
Maintain professional relationship and focus on client	Typical
Therapist's Reactions to Problematic Empathy	
Seeking outside help from clinicians, colleagues, and supervisors	General
Processed feelings with the client in and out of the session	Typical
Client's Role in Problematic Empathy	
Difficulty or lack of desire to form relationship in therapy	General
Client became angry, hostile, or aggressive in response	Typical
Interpersonal dependence and tendencies of helplessness	Typical

Specific Case of Too Much Empathy

Demographics

Female client	Typical
Young/college age client	Typical

Target Issues

Trauma and abuse	Typical
Family issues	Typical

Timeframe Working with Client

Long term, more than 1 year	Typical
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Recognition of Problematic Empathy

Felt deeply connected to client and their history	Typical
Thought of client outside of therapy sessions	Typical
Felt an over-identification with a client's presenting issues	Typical
Found it difficult to maintain objectivity and appropriateness	Typical
In-Session Strategies to Manage Problematic Empathy	
Self-monitoring awareness of problematic empathy	Typical
Interactions with and awareness of effect on client	Typical
Therapist's Reactions to Problematic Empathy	
Sought consultation and supervision for case	Typical
Discussions of transparency and self-disclosure with client	Typical
Client's Role in Problematic Empathy	
Grew closer/connected more with therapist	Typical
Client displayed overwhelming emotional reactions/behaviors	Typical
