

Friedlander, M.L., Lambert, J.E., Escudero, V., Cragun, C. (2008). **How do therapists enhance family alliances? Sequential analysis of therapist-client behavior in two contrasting cases.** *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 45: 75-87.

Abstract

To identify alliance-related behavior patterns in more and less successful family therapy, we intensively analyzed two cases with highly discrepant outcomes. Both families were seen by the same experienced clinician. Results showed that participants' perceptions of the alliance, session impact, and improvement at three points in time were congruent with the families' differential outcomes and with observer-rated alliance behavior using the System for Observing Family Therapy Alliances (Friedlander et al., 2006a). In this measure, therapist behaviors *contribute* to the alliance and client behaviors *reveal* the strength of the alliance on four dimensions: *Engagement in the Therapeutic Process*, *Emotional Connection with the Therapist*, *Safety within the Therapeutic System*, and *Shared Sense of Purpose within the Family*. In the poor outcome case, observer ratings and self-reported alliance scores revealed a persistently "split" alliance between family members; this family dropped out mid-treatment. Only in the good outcome case did the clients follow the therapist's alliance-building interventions with positive alliance behaviors; sequential analyses showed that therapist contributions to Engagement significantly activated client Engagement behavior, and therapist Emotional Connection interventions significantly activated client Emotional Connection.