

Moment by Moment: The Therapeutic Action of Psychodynamic Psychotherapy

Martha Stark, M.D.

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How do we position ourselves, moment by moment, in relation to our clients and how does that position inform both what we come to know about our clients and how we then intervene? Do we position ourselves outside the therapeutic field (the better to formulate interpretations), decenter from our own experience (the better to respond empathically), or remain very much centered within our own experience (the better to "use the self" to engage authentically). In other words, is our ultimate goal (1) enhancement of knowledge "in" the client; (2) provision of experience "for" the client; or (3) engagement in relationship "with" the client.

Martha has developed a comprehensive theory of therapeutic action that integrates the interpretive perspective of classical psychoanalysis (Model 1 -- knowledge), the corrective-provision perspective of self psychology and those object relations theories emphasizing the internal "absence of good" (Model 2 -- experience), and the relational perspective of contemporary psychoanalysis and those object relations theories emphasizing the internal "presence of bad" (Model 3 -- relationship). By way of numerous clinical vignettes, Martha will demonstrate that these three modes of therapeutic action (knowledge, experience, and relationship) are not mutually exclusive but mutually enhancing.

Martha will also be presenting her ideas about the client's "relentless pursuit of the object" -- a pursuit that is, in part, masochistic and, in part, sadistic. She will speak to the concepts of both relentless hope (to which the client clings in order to avoid confronting certain intolerably painful realities about the object of her desire) and relentless outrage (to which the client resorts in those moments of dawning recognition that the object is not going to be forthcoming after all). Treatment of the client with these underlying sadomasochistic dynamics involves transforming her relentless pursuit of the object into a capacity to relent, to forgive, to let go, and to move on. Martha will attempt to demonstrate the therapist's use of the three modes of therapeutic action to facilitate this transformation of the client's infantile need to possess and control the object (and, when thwarted in her desire, to punish the object by destroying it) into the mature capacity to accept the object as it is -- a painful process that will require of the client that she be willing and able, at last, to confront the reality of her object's very real limitations and grieve them.

Participants will be given the opportunity, in this small intimate group setting, to present some of their own clinical material so that we can, together, reflect upon the action of the three agents in effecting therapeutic change.

Martha Stark, M.D., is a psychiatrist / psychoanalyst on the Faculty of Harvard Medical School and in private practice in Boston. In addition, she is a Teaching Analyst at the Boston Psychoanalytic Institute, is a Teaching / Supervising Analyst at the Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis, is on the Faculty of the Center for Psychoanalytic Studies at the Massachusetts General Hospital, teaches in the Continuing Education Program at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology, and teaches in the Program of Continuing Education at the Smith College School for Social Work. Martha is also author of 3 award-winning books on psychoanalytic theory and technique (all of which are 5-star rated on amazon.com): *Working with Resistance*; *A Primer on Working with Resistance*; and *Modes of Therapeutic Action*. She is currently at work on her new book entitled *Relentless Hope: The Refusal to Grieve*.

If you are interested in attending this workshop, please complete the attached form and return it to the Centre via email or fax (613 233 4947). Upon receipt of the completed form you will be advised as to whether you are registered or on the waiting list, and will receive further details about this workshop.

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Name

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Please add me to the list for Dr. Stark's Workshop, and forward deposit and registration information to my attention.