

Rule 1: Watch for Clinically Relevant Behavior (CRB)

Rule 2: Evoke CRB

Rule 3: Reinforce CRBs

Rule 4: Observe the potentially reinforcing effects of therapist behavior in relation to client CRBs.

Rule 5: Give interpretations of variables that affect client behavior

As a general strategy, the therapist can interpret client behavior in terms of learning histories and functional relationships.

Giving interpretations or reasons for behavior can affect the client in two ways.

First, the reason can lead to a prescription, instruction, or rule. The interpretation, "You are acting towards your wife like you did toward your mother" can easily be taken as a prescription or rule that the client hears as, "Don't be so unfair to your wife; treat her differently since she obviously is not your mother. And if you treat her fairly, your marital relationship will improve." Second, a reason can enhance the salience of (increase contact with) controlling variables and increase positive and negative reinforcement density (Ferster, 1979).

For example, a female client learns during FAP that the reason she feels rejected at times during the session is a function of the therapist's lack of attentiveness and, further, this lack of attentiveness is related to how harried or rushed the therapist appears at the beginning of the session. This interpretation could increase the client's noticing the therapist's mood at the beginning of the session and significantly affect the client's experience of a lapse in the therapist's attention. As a result, the client is in better contact (she notices how harried the therapist is), and then experiences less aversiveness when he is inattentive.

It should be pointed out that Rule 5 is based on the general idea that an interpretation is simply a verbal behavior and does not carry any special truthfulness.