

Psychoanalytic listening, opening psychoanalytic space and creating a shared psychoanalytic frame in first interviews

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Abstract

The obstacles to beginning new psychoanalyses are partly in the mind of the psychoanalyst. The unconscious transference and countertransference dynamics of first interviews can be so intense that they can be just as difficult to deal with for the interviewing analyst, as they are for the patient. Psychoanalysts may unconsciously defend against these dynamics, for example by remaining unaware of them and so failing to hear the patient; or by adopting an excessively rigid frame based on an idealized view of how the interview should proceed, and so failing to receive the patient. The study of first interviews carried out by the Working Party on Initiating Psychoanalysis (WPIP) of the European Psychoanalytic Federation has shown that there can actually be many forms of psychoanalytic listening, if they are adapted to the specific needs of the interview dynamics that arise with a given patient at a given moment. The aim of such listening is to develop a minimal shared understanding with the patient which s/he can recognize as valuable, as well as a shared, meaningful frame in which the patient can feel at home, allowing him/her to enter psychoanalysis. I will present ideas and experiences derived both from the WPIP study and from my own experience.

References

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Biography

Bernard Reith is Training Analyst with the Swiss Psychoanalytic Society and works as psychoanalyst, psychoanalytic psychotherapist and psychiatrist in private practice in Geneva, Switzerland. He is former chair of the Working Party on Initiating Psychoanalysis (WPIP) of the European Psychoanalytic Federation (EPF), and presently Co-chair for Europe of the Working Parties Committee of the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA). He is also Board member for the Analyst at Work section of the International Journal of Psychoanalysis.