

# Ethics and Boundaries

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# Blurring Boundaries

Analytic group psychotherapists who blur boundaries risk losing valuable leverage in

- interpreting as transference and resistance all members' negative treatment reactions.

# Maintaining the Frame of Treatment

Maintaining the frame of treatment shields members from at least eight (8) dangers of blurred boundaries:

- Breaches of confidentiality
- Gaslighting
- Looping
- The Double-Bind
- Dumping
- Overstimulation
- The Emperor's New Clothes Effect"
- Scapegoating

# Boundary Crossings

Boundary crossings are not inherently boundary violations. However, altering the frame always has an impact on the treatment.

## Boundary Violations:

- Constitute and abuse of power
- Occur when the frame has been altered to such an extent that members experience iatrogenic treatment reactions.

# Symptoms of Iatrogenesis

Symptoms of anxiety and depression are iatrogenic rather than transference when:

- The ego dysfunction which often resembles a narcissistic transference reaction occurs in a contaminated group environment well into the treatment and **AFTER** the establishment of a normal transference with members who theretofore did not exhibit signs of a narcissistic transference. Or, the onset of the symptoms occurs after the alteration of the frame

# Symptoms of Iatrogenesis (cont.)

- The symptoms can range in severity from mild to severe
- The symptoms do not appear to be amenable to any type of intervention. Forward progress in the therapy ceases and a treatment impasse ensues
- The leader takes no responsibility for the impasses while the member takes the full brunt of the responsibility for the impasse.

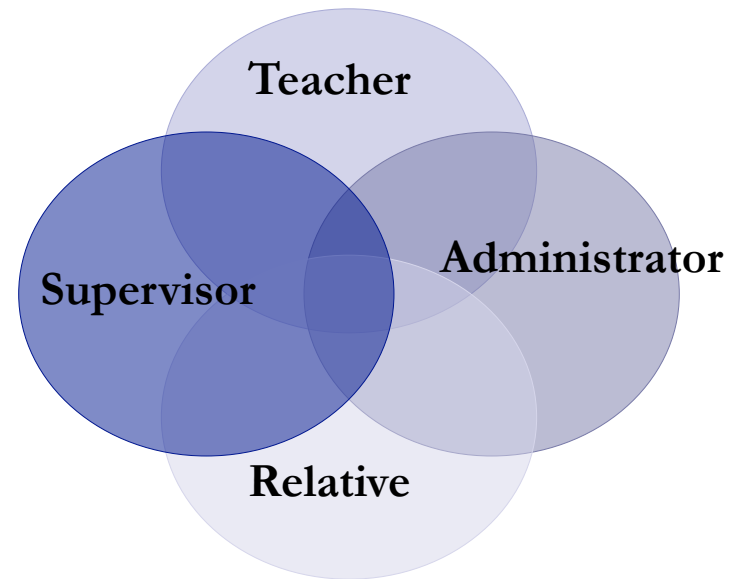
# Symptoms of Iatrogenesis (cont.)

- Further, even if the leader does take responsibility but fails to make the necessary changes in the treatment environment that would foster a secure frame.
- The symptoms generally abate after the group member leaves the toxic environment.

# Iatrogenic Treatment Reactions in Group

Iatrogenic treatment reactions in group can occur in a variety of ways. For example when:

- Leader is simultaneously the supervisor, teaching, institute administrator, friend or even relative of group members





# Iatrogenic Treatment Reactions in Group

The leader raises fees based on subjective criteria:

- Greed
- Sense of deprivation
- Revenge

rather than based on objective criteria such as increases in cost of living, inflation and changes in the leader's expertise, experience and training.

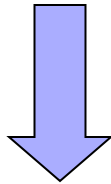
# Iatrogenic Treatment Reactions in Group

- The leaders' transparency overly gratifies members' fantasies as is the case in groups run the living room of the leader's home office.
- Leaders blame members for all treatment impasses.

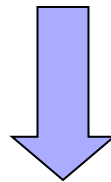
# Danger of Leader's Behavior

- Interferes with members willingness and ability to abide by the group treatment contract which states: “ put all your thoughts and feelings, and why you feel that way, toward each other into words”.
- The prime dictum of any healing profession: “Above all else, do no harm” is violated.

**Blurred Boundaries**



**Contaminated Treatment**



**Iatrogenesis**

# Research Results

## Results of my Research:

1. In analytic group therapy settings where the treatment is contaminated by blurred boundaries, transference isn't always transference.
2. Blurred boundaries are endemic to most group training institutes, independent of theoretical orientation
3. Blurred boundaries may produce iatrogenic treatment reactions of anxiety and depression that range from mild to severe.

