

# Therapeutic Use of Self



Camden Coalition  
of Healthcare Providers

# Therapeutic Use of Self: What is it?

- A technique used in psychotherapy, Occupational Therapy & Nursing
- Conscious use of one's personality and knowledge
- Involves thoughtful self-disclosure & non verbal language
- **“The use of oneself in such a way that one becomes an effective tool in the evaluation and intervention process”**
- Our proposal: Therapeutic Use of Self to treat issues of attachment



# Therapeutic Use of Self

- Involves *determining what is clinically appropriate* for the patient
- It has a purpose
- What is beneficial for one patient could be disruptive and even harmful to another

LET ME TELL YOU  
ABOUT THE  
THING I LIKE



# Therapeutic Use of Self: *Buffering the Power Differential*

- There is an inherent power difference between a provider and a patient
  - Therapeutic Use of Self recognizes the existence of different kinds of power and uses that to benefit the patient
- ❖ Lets talk about Isa...



**VIDEO:  
Karen Rentas,  
Isa's Story**



# Isa

- Significant history of trauma
- Mother abandoned her when she was 5 years old
- Sexual abuse by her father
- Reports she raised herself
- Completed up to 7<sup>th</sup> grade
- Opioid Dependence now in Methadone treatment
- Labeled as 'non-compliant'
- Bilingual, Spanish is her first language
  
- First Home Visit:
  - ❖ Sitting on the floor while she was sitting on her bed



# Therapeutic Use of Self: *Using Intentional Self-Disclosure*

- Affect refers to an observable expression of emotion
  - Tearful
  - Flat
  - Tensed Forehead (worried, surprise)
- Selectively disclosing how I feel in response to what the patient is sharing, in a way that is therapeutically beneficial
  - A patient discloses with great difficulty a traumatic experience. Provider internally responds with racing heart and some discomfort in stomach.
  - Provider decides to disclose part of his/her reaction; “wow, as you were telling me what happened, I could feel it in my stomach... I could feel how overwhelming that was for you”



# Therapeutic Use of Self: *Using Intentional Self-Disclosure*

