

Psychoanalytic Listening
Spring 2020
Contemporary Freudian Society
Washington Program
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OVERVIEW of CLASS

Analytic listening, loosely based on the infant observation model, has as its aim to develop in the student a capacity to pay close attention to the patient's material for the purpose of making contact with the patient. This is not a usual or often comfortable way of listening and requires study and practice. In this course I will ask that we separate our listening into three levels as an attempt to study this way of working, how to listen as a psychoanalyst.

Level One. Through his/her very close attention, the therapist constructs a detailed narrative of the patient's material. We call this the **veridical description** of a session or exchange between therapist and analyst. The narrative includes the nonverbal and pre-symbolic experience from the first moment of the hour (including the waiting room greeting and entrance). We are interested in helping the student to gain the capacity to hold in mind, as the hour goes on, a detailed account of what has been said by the patient, as well as what is felt in the countertransference. This allows the therapist to think back over the hour during the session, reviewing what has been communicated, providing the therapist with the material that will enable him/her to listen and understand on the other two levels. **At this level, the therapist does not seek to attribute meaning to the patient's material**—no judgements or theorizing, as best as one can manage.

Level Two. At this level the therapist moves into the **symbolic realm** of comprehension, attending to the **unconscious meanings** in the patient's material. The group will be encouraged to free associate in relation to the imagery, feeling, language, verbal and nonverbal content. Together the class may develop a rich and nuanced picture of one patient in one particular hour. Countertransference will be closely followed. The students' theories and intellectual understanding will be included in the discussion.

Level Three. Here the therapist can integrate the understanding gained in levels one and two and attempt a formulation, an **intervention that will be of use to the patient**. The therapeutic effectiveness of the intervention depends on the quality of the contact --how in touch can the therapist/analyst be with his/her patient.

In our first meeting we will work with a poem, attempting to differentiate the various levels of listening. I will provide copies of the poem (Alicia Ostriker's "The Kiss of Judas") and painting for each of you -- Janet Shaye will have them when she meets with you on September 16.

In our following meetings we will work with clinical material, candidates are requested to bring in typed clinical process notes from a recent clinical hour, providing cc for each class member. We will determine a schedule of presenters in the first class meeting in October.

Learning Objectives:

- 1.) Describe and differentiate each of the three levels of analytic listening.
- 2.) Explain how the analyst works to be in contact with the patient's unconscious mental state.
- 3.) List several potential interventions with a patient as determined by the patient's level of development, i.e., primarily concrete or symbolic.