Emotional Processing Using Role Playing and Therapeutic Letters in the Treatment of Personality Disorders

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Meaningful **cognitive** and simultaneously **experiential technique** for working with deep emotional schemas, formatted in childhood, is writing therapeutic letters. Inclusions of emotion regulation skills in the treatment especially for patients with personality disorder enhance the efficacy of CBT. Therapeutic letters are intended to extend the work of therapy **beyond the consulting room** door by continuing the meaning-making that occurred in a therapeutic conversation.

We used therapeutic letters to help the patient identify difficult feelings, process them in a way that maybe they could not in a therapy session, and finally get release and freedom from them.

Typical therapeutic letters are address to **important close persons** from the patient life, like parents, siblings, a partner and friends, children. The patient uses the letter to impress his/her feeling and needs, inclusive defenses of his rights in past and present.

Patient writes a letter at home, and he brings it then into the session and reads it to the therapist. These letters are **not intended to be sent** to that important person, but to process strong emotions inside the patient.

In fact the patient writes a letter to his **inner representation of an important person**, who was connected with the development of the maladaptive schemas. The letter-writing process is inherently collaborative and enables the patient to work at his or her own pace while also facilitating patient empowerment.