

Edited by
Nikolaos Kazantzis and Luciano L'Abate

Handbook of
Homework Assignments
in Psychotherapy

Research, Practice, and Prevention



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PREFACE

The aim of this *Handbook of Homework Assignments in Psychotherapy: Research, Practice, and Prevention* is to provide comprehensive resource on the role of homework assignments in psychotherapy and prevention. However, the process of generalizing in-session therapeutic work through between-session activity has a long history in psychotherapy. This *Handbook* is designed to elucidate and extend that history by presenting theoretical and clinically focused descriptions of the role of homework assignments in a range of psychotherapies, clinical populations, and presenting problems. Designed for both the beginning and the experienced psychotherapy practitioner, this *Handbook* assumes a basic knowledge of psychopathology and practice of psychotherapy and prevention. The *Handbook* aims to contribute to the professional resources for all psychotherapy practitioners and researchers, in private and public practice, graduate students in clinical and counseling psychology, couple and family therapists, as well as residents in psychiatry. This book does not aim to review the theories of psychotherapy in detail, specific treatments of psychopathology, clinical assessment, or basic psychotherapy and prevention processes that are currently available in numerous psychotherapy textbooks. This *Handbook* is a clinical resource designed to provide a focused coverage of how to integrate homework assignments into psychotherapy practice, and in the prevention of mental illness.

OUTLINE FOR THE HANDBOOK

This *Handbook* comprises four distinct parts. Part I of the book consists of nine chapters that describe the process of using homework assignments in a range of psychotherapy approaches (i.e., Chapters 1–9). As we were proposing a *Handbook* on homework assignments covering a range of different psychotherapy approaches, we made an effort to provide a broad guiding structure to facilitate consistency within this section. Thus, we invited primarily clinical chapters including the following: (a) brief overview of the therapeutic approach, (b) description of the role of homework assignments in the approach (main part of the chapter), (c) at least one relevant case study to illustrate how homework contributes to psychotherapy and prevention.

In Chapter 1, Deborah Roth Ledley and Jonathan Huppert extend their research contributions by describing the role of homework assignments in behavior therapy. In Chapter 2, Marjorie Witty presents a discussion on the role of client-instigated homework assignments in client-centered psychotherapy. In Chapter 3, Judith Beck and Michael Tompkins contribute to the cognitive therapy practice literature by presenting a description of homework assignments that emphasizes the

role of the conceptualization and collaborative relationship. In Chapter 4, Jennifer Ellison and Leslie Greenberg present a description of the role of homework assignments in emotion-focused experiential therapy. In Chapter 5, Jami Young and Laura Mufson describe how homework assignments are integrated in interpersonal therapy. In Chapter 6, George Stricker dispels many misconceptions by explaining how homework assignments are integrated into psychodynamic therapy. In Chapter 7, Michael Twohig, Heather Pierson, and Steven Hayes describe how homework assignments are integrated by those practicing acceptance and commitment therapy. In Chapter 8, Michael Robbins, José Szapocznik, and Gonzalo Pérez outline how homework assignments are integrated into brief strategic family therapy. The final contribution to this section, Chapter 9, presents Robert Neimeyer and David Winter's account of how homework assignments can contribute to personal construct therapy.

Part II of the book consists of three chapters that describe the process of using homework assignments for different populations (i.e., Chapters 10–12). We again outlined fairly broad criteria for contributors' discussion of how homework is integrated into the process of psychotherapy, what difficulties are encountered with particular populations, and what homework assignments are helpful. We also encouraged chapter authors to briefly outline, as much as the literature permitted, the empirical support for the use or particular types of homework assignments being discussed. Thus, we invited primarily clinical chapters including the following: (a) an overview of common barriers to the successful use of homework, (b) empirically supported homework for the population, (c) types of homework assignments based on theoretical and empirical support, (d) at least one case study of psychotherapy and prevention including case formulation.

In Chapter 10, Helen DeVries outlines her approach to using homework assignments for older adults. In Chapter 11, Norman Epstein and Donald Baucom describe how they integrate homework assignments into couples therapy. In Chapter 12, Kathleen Newcomb Rekart and Jay Lebow discuss the use of homework assignments for families receiving psychotherapy.

Part III of the book consists of 10 chapters that describe the process of using homework assignments for a range of complex clinical problems (i.e., Chapters 13–22). Once again, we decided to outline fairly broad criteria for contributors' discussion of how homework is integrated into the process of psychotherapy, what difficulties are encountered with particular populations, and what homework assignments are often helpful. We asked contributors to follow the same guiding structure as that incorporated in Part II.

In Chapter 13, Noam Lindenboim, Alex Chapman, and Marsha Linehan describe how homework assignments are integrated into psychotherapy for borderline personality disorder. In Chapter 14, Lawrence Riso and Michael Thase outline how homework assignments are useful in psychotherapy for chronic depression. In Chapter 15, Malcolm Johnson presents his approach to the effective use of homework assignments for clients with chronic pain. In Chapter 16, Tanya Schlam and Terence Wilson discuss the use of homework assignments in psychotherapy for eating disorders. In Chapter 17, Melanie Fennell presents her approach to the use of homework assignments in therapy for low self-esteem. In Chapter 18, David Clark extends his contributions to the clinical practice literature in discussing the role of homework in therapy for obsessions and compulsions. In Chapter 19, Hazel Dunn and Anthony Morrison extend their research contributions by discussing the role of homework in therapy for

psychosis. In Chapter 20, Nancy Gambescia and Gerald Weeks detail their approach to the use of homework in psychotherapy for sexual dysfunction. In Chapter 21, Timothy Apodaca and Peter Monti outline the use of homework in psychotherapy for substance abuse. Finally, in Chapter 22, Janet Leathem and Muriel Christianson present an account of how homework assignments can assist in psychotherapy to aid rehabilitation following traumatic brain injury.

The final part of the book consists of three concluding chapters designed to synthesize and propose directions the four preceding sections. In Chapter 23, Michael Lambert, Cory Harmon, and Karstin Slade present directions for research on homework in psychotherapy and behavior change. In Chapter 24, Dana Nelson and Louis Castonguay present directions for the integration of homework in psychotherapy practice. In Chapter 25, T. Mark Harwood, Joselyne Sulzner, and Larry Beutler present directions for homework in psychotherapy prevention.

CONTENTS

Introduction and Historical Overview	1
<i>Nikolaos Kazantzis and Luciano L'Abate</i>	
PART I. PSYCHOTHERAPY APPROACHES	17
1. Behavior Therapy	19
<i>Deborah Roth Ledley and Jonathan D. Huppert</i>	
2. Client-Centered Therapy	35
<i>Marjorie C. Wittly</i>	
3. Cognitive Therapy	51
<i>Judith S. Beck and Michael A. Tompkins</i>	
4. Emotion-Focused Experiential Therapy	65
<i>Jennifer A. Ellison and Leslie S. Greenberg</i>	
5. Interpersonal Psychotherapy	85
<i>Jami F. Young and Laura Mufson</i>	
6. Psychodynamic Therapy	101
<i>George Stricker</i>	
7. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy	113
<i>Michael P. Twohig, Heather M. Pierson, and Steven C. Hayes</i>	
8. Brief Strategic Family Therapy	133
<i>Michael S. Robbins, José Szapocznik, and Gonzalo A. Pérez</i>	
9. Personal Construct Therapy	151
<i>Robert A. Neimeyer and David A. Winter</i>	
PART II. CLIENT POPULATIONS	173
10. Older Adults	175
<i>Helen M. DeVries</i>	
11. Couples	187
<i>Norman B. Epstein and Donald H. Baucom</i>	

12. Families	203
<i>Kathleen Newcomb Rekart and Jay Lebow</i>	
PART III. SPECIFIC PROBLEMS	225
13. Borderline Personality Disorder	227
<i>Noam Lindenboim, Alex L. Chapman, and Marsha M. Linehan</i>	
14. Chronic Depression	247
<i>Lawrence P. Riso and Michael E. Thase</i>	
15. Chronic Pain	263
<i>Malcolm H. Johnson</i>	
16. Eating Disorders	279
<i>Tanya R. Schlam and G. Terence Wilson</i>	
17. Low Self-Esteem	297
<i>Melanie J. V. Fennell</i>	
18. Obsessions and Compulsions	315
<i>David A. Clark</i>	
19. Psychosis	335
<i>Hazel Dunn and Anthony P. Morrison</i>	
20. Sexual Dysfunction	351
<i>Nancy Gambescia and Gerald Weeks</i>	
21. Substance Abuse	369
<i>Timothy R. Apodaca and Peter M. Monti</i>	
22. Traumatic Brain Injury	389
<i>Janet M. Leathem and Muriel Christianson</i>	
PART IV. DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH, PRACTICE, AND PREVENTION	405
23. Directions for Research on Homework	407
<i>Michael J. Lambert, S. Cory Harmon, and Karstin Slade</i>	
24. Directions for the Integration of Homework in Practice	425
<i>Dana L. Nelson, Louis G. Castonguay, and Fiona Barwick</i>	
25. Directions for Homework in Psychotherapy Prevention	445
<i>T. Mark Harwood, Joselyne M. Sulzner, and Larry E. Beutler</i>	
Index	459

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Nikolaos Kazantzis and Luciano L'Abate

There has been substantive research into the effects of homework assignments on psychotherapy outcomes. Studies have examined the correlational effects of homework compliance, and contrasted comparable therapies with and without homework. In contrast, research into the processes and mechanisms by which homework produces its effects remains far less developed. Nevertheless, research into homework assignments is an essential and evolving enterprise to understanding how and when psychotherapy works.

Before discussing the findings from contemporary research on homework research, we present a brief historical overview in order to place the current research, and practice applications in this book in context of the evolving field of psychotherapy. This overview leads to a consideration of the theoretical underpinnings and empirical evidence supporting homework's role in psychotherapy.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The use of between-session time for treatment purposes has its origins in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. Freud (1924) suggested that patients should face their fears in everyday situations once they had worked through their conflicts in psychoanalysis (cf. Dattilio, 2002). It is also noteworthy that early psychoanalytic and directive formulations of psychotherapy included the use of homework assignments as an additional component to in-session therapeutic work (e.g., Dunlop, 1936; Herzberg, 1941; Thorne, 1948). However, it is George A. Kelly's (1955) fixed role therapy that has been credited with the systematic integration of homework into psychotherapy. The systematic use of homework was next represented in behavior therapy formulations (Kanfer & Phillips, 1966; Shelton & Ackerman, 1974). In particular, the use of therapeutic assignments between sessions was popularized by therapists working with sexual dysfunction (i.e., Kanfer, 1970; Kanfer & Phillips, 1966) where homework was conceptualized as the beginning point of therapy structure (Heiman, Lo Piccolo, & Lo Piccolo, 1981). The advent of cognitive therapy as espoused by Aaron T. Beck and Albert Ellis further emphasized homework as a core and