

## Module 2: Verbal Response Modes and Intentions

The purpose of Module 1 is to teach verbal response modes and intentions. Verbal response modes refer to the basic grammatical tools used by therapists—the “what they do” in session. As defined by Hill and colleagues (8, 11, 12) these include minimal encourager, silence, approval-reassurance, information, direct guidance, closed question, open question, restatement, reflection, interpretation, confrontation, nonverbal referent, self-disclosure, and other.

Intentions refer to the therapist’s rationale for selecting a specific behavior, response mode, technique, or intervention to use with a patient at any given moment within a session. Whereas verbal response modes refer to what therapists say, intentions refer to why therapists choose to say what they do.

The Therapist Intention List, with 19 intentions, includes the following: set limits, get information, give information, support, focus, clarify, hope, cathart, cognition, behaviors, self-control, feelings, insight, change, reinforce change, resistance, challenge, relationship, and therapist needs. Hill et al. (8) provided evidence that therapist intentions provide a more adequate description of therapist interventions than verbal response modes.

Trainees are asked to rate two standardized transcripts for both verbal response modes. They are also asked to rate the therapist’s intentions in one of these. In addition, the seminar leader chooses a few transcribed pages from one of the psychotherapy sessions that was taped in pre-training for each person and gives trainees copies of these pages. Thus, trainees have samples of their peers work. They are asked to rate the intentions of their peers, which are then checked against what their peer said she or he intended.

We have found that this last exercise is most beneficial because it promotes group cohesion by exposing trainees to each other’s work. By comparing their intentions to what their peers believe they are, trainees begin to examine the role of the observing self in psychotherapy.

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