

Progress in Psychotherapy: The Perspective of Control-Mastery Theory

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Abstract: In the classical psychoanalytic tradition, the patient is seen as unconsciously governed by forces that are at odds with the healing process. But over the years, the concept of resistance against change has been subjected to modifications, and the patient's contribution to the therapeutic relationship has come to be seen as more oriented to a conscious and unconscious collaboration with the clinician. This article aims to explore a new way of understanding how progress in psychotherapy is achieved and to reframe the therapeutic relationship from the point of view of Control-Mastery Theory (CMT). According to CMT, people are motivated to achieve adaptive goals, to master their traumas, and to feel better; to this purpose, patients unconsciously assume proactive roles in the therapeutic process. Indeed, they work during therapy to disprove their pathogenic beliefs, testing them in the therapeutic relationship, and helping the therapist through coaching behaviors, attitudes, and communications aimed at providing helpful information to understand the components of their own unconscious plan.

Keywords: Control-Mastery Theory, therapeutic alliance, transference tests, passive-into-active tests, coaching behaviors.

In the classical psychoanalytic tradition, the patient is seen as unconsciously governed by forces that are at odds with the healing process: The patient is not endowed with a basic drive to change, but with basic desires to satisfy unconscious sexual and aggressive wishes and with unconscious resistances against becoming conscious of these wishes. Over the years, some authors have proposed visions of a more collaborative and participative patient, driven by the desire to make the therapist understand what s/he needs and her/his own internal world. This conceptual evolution has reached a point in which the patient's ability to work consciously and unconsciously in therapy is recognized

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