
ABSTRACT

Psychotherapy for a woman trying to fill “a void in her life”

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The present paper reports on the process of psychotherapy comprising 191 sessions over approximately six years for a client who repeatedly acted out in order to fill “a void in her life”. Throughout the sessions, when the client acted out, the therapist persistently investigated the meaning of the desires forming the background to this behavior. The acting out continued until the end of treatment; however, the client came to view her acting out as a behavior that she chose for herself. At her final session, the client stated that “I think I have come this far because of the cost of the sessions, the distance, and the firm stance taken by the therapist that she was just there to talk to”. Acting out was the process by which the client desperately tried to deal with her unfulfilled desires. The role of psychotherapy was to provide a place in which the client could seek the best way for her to live with those desires. The distance between client and therapist appeared to play an important role in the process of this search.

Key Words: acting out, “void in life”, distance
