



On “transformational Relationships”

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What practitioners have known for decades now is acquiring empirical support: not only must the treatment relationship between social service practitioners and their clients be established before one can expect specific treatment elements to work effectively; the relationship itself is understood to provide the possibility of a “corrective emotional experience” that not only promotes engagement, but actually drives positive outcomes in and of itself. The challenge, then, is to codify relational factors sufficiently to allow them to be operationalized and managed effectively by service providers. To date, efforts to do so have foundered conceptually: codifying such subjective states on the part of the client as “being accepted” or “being respected,” or the social worker’s subjective stance of “being interested in” or “having high expectations for” the client has proven elusive. However, practitioners, for the most part working in the field of addiction services, have solved this problem; they have developed and applied an intuitive, easy to use, stage-based model of the treatment relationship. Called the “transtheoretical model,” it focuses on the ways in which both service providers and clients are interacting, specifically with regard to the nature of the information they exchange and how it is being used with intentionality by the client to improve his or her life and functioning.

The Superstar Foundation’s commitment to promoting the use of such “transformational” relationships in everyday social service practice – especially for practitioners working with children, teens and young adults – is an important contribution to improving social services and outcomes for these groups.