How to Work Effectively with Individuals With Personality Disorders

Gregory W. Lester, Ph.D.
Part I
The Unique Dysfunction of Personality Disorders
and the Targets for Intervention

1. The Core Psychological Characteristic of Personality Disorders
   1. Observing Ego Function
      Reflective Function
   2. Effects of Reflective Functioning Deficit
      Motivation
      Self-correction
      Affect tolerance

2. The Importance of Knowing the Cause of Personality Disorders
   1. Analytic/Psychological Theory
   2. Biological Theory
   3. Current Conclusions and the importance to interventions

Part II
Interventions for Personality Disorders

1. Treatment Approaches

   1. Treatment for Profound change

      Works by overturning the dialogue imperative until there is an altering the psychological functioning of the individual and family on a basic level so they automatically enter problem-solving mode rather than derailment mode when something goes wrong.

      - Only highly treatable individuals and families with personality disorders are appropriate for treatment designed to produce profound change

      - This treatment addresses the deepest levels and is the most rigorous and demanding and is the most difficult and carries the most risk of escalation and acting out
2. Treatment for Moderate Change

Works by exposing the individual or family to additional behavioral options until the social functioning of the individual or family is altered to a lessened intensity of drama

-Moderately treatable families and individuals with personality disorders are appropriate for treatment designed to shift from disorder to style

-This treatment addresses a moderate level of the disorder, is moderate in its rigor and demandingness, and carries moderate risks

3. Treatment for Targeted Change

Works by altering the conditions or contingencies in the situation or circumstance so that productive results are produced in that area of individual or family functioning

-A majority of families and individuals with personality disorders are appropriate for specific, problem-oriented treatment

-This treatment is significantly lower in goal, rigor, and risks

4. Core Treatment Techniques

1. Cause-and Effect Connections

2. “Observing Ego” Comments

3. Behavioral Chain Analysis

2. Management Approach

Designed to to minimize the bad external effects caused by the disorder (viz. disruptive behavior in a residential program or on a medical unit) or to allow for reduced interference with the achievement of specific results
(viz. work projects, business agreements, partnerships)

Core Management Techniques

1. Pattern Interrupts
2. SET
3. Diagnostic Reframing
4. Problem-Solving Confrontation
Bibliography and References


