

**Hoffart, A., Sexton, H., & Nordahl, H. M. (2005). Connection between patient and therapist and therapist's competence in schema-focused therapy of personality problems. *Psychotherapy Research, 15*, 409-419.**

The aim of this study was to examine whether the connection between patient and therapist, therapist competence, and the interaction between connection and competence, measured in the early process of schema-focused therapy of personality problems, influenced treatment outcome. Connection is a rater-observed measure of the intimacy and mutual engagement between patient and therapist that appears to represent an easily observable aspect of the therapeutic alliance. The sample consisted of 35 patients with panic disorder and/or agoraphobia and DSM-IV Cluster C personality traits who participated in an 11-week inpatient program. Patients and an expert observer rated the schema-focused individual therapy sessions. Better observer-rated connection in the first session predicted greater across-session reduction in the strength of belief in the particular schemas addressed in the individual therapies. Connection was unrelated to across-session symptomatic improvement and to overall change. Competence predicted a reduction in maladaptive schemas during the schema-focused treatment and in the number of Cluster C personality traits from behavioural t to the follow-up period but was unrelated to across-session change. There was no interaction between connection and competence, indicating that they influenced treatment independently of each other. © 2005 Society for Psychotherapy Research.