

Process of change in family therapy for adolescent anorexia nervosa

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Therapeutic models of change

- Models of change and therapeutic modalities
 - Psychodynamic therapy – Changes in reflective functioning and affect regulation
 - Behaviour therapy – Extinction of maladaptive learnt behaviours
 - CBT – Behaviour change leading to improved perception of self-efficacy
- Models of change and family therapy
 - Structural family therapy – Changing family structure/intra-family boundaries
 - Attachment based family therapy – Repairing relational/attachment ruptures
 - Narrative family therapy – Changing self narratives from disempowering life stories to self-narratives that are empowering and self-efficacious

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Common versus model specific factors

Common features and functions of psychotherapy

- **Common features**

- a helpful relationship
- a healing setting
- a rationale or “myth” explaining the client’s problems
- a “ritual” implied by the myth that is believed to help solve the problem”

- **Common functions**

- a decrease in alienation through the therapeutic relationship
- expectations of improvement
- providing new learning experiences
- emotional arousal
- enhancing a sense of mastery and self-efficacy
- providing opportunities for practice

Recent common factor accounts

- an emotionally charged bond between the therapist and patient
- a confiding healing setting in which therapy takes place
- a therapist who provides a psychologically derived and culturally embedded explanation for emotional distress
- an explanation that is adaptive (i.e., provides viable and believable options for overcoming specific difficulties) and is accepted by the patient
- a set of procedures or rituals engaged by the patient and therapist that leads the patient to enact something that is positive, helpful, or adaptive

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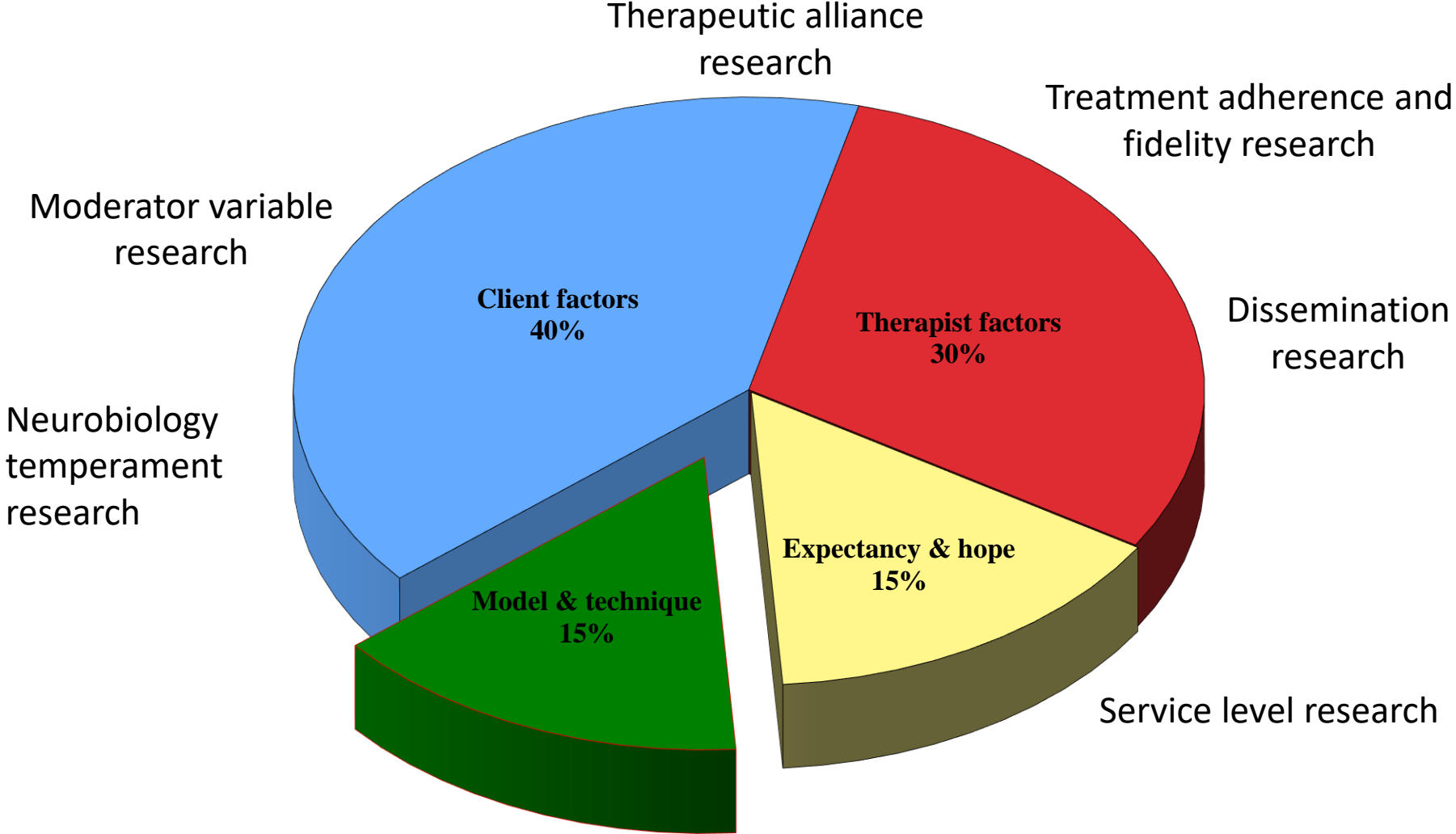
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Common factors in psychotherapy



Short term versus long term goals of psychotherapy

- Short term goals (therapy model specific techniques)
 - Free association in psychoanalysis
 - Diary monitoring in CBT
 - Circular questions in family therapy
- Long term goals (broader therapeutic strategies)
 - Paying attention to behaviours, thoughts and feelings leading to self-reflection and new insights in the patient

Psychosomatic family model
 (individual vulnerability interacts with specific dysfunctional family transactions leading to ED)



Illness family model
 (the family accommodates to an enduring, life-threatening illness)

ED an expression of interpersonal conflict

ED an illness of unknown but not family aetiology

ED an illness with underlying neurobiological vulnerability

1975

1985

1995

2005

2015

Putative mechanism of change

Clarifying intra-family boundaries

Reducing enmeshment of family relationships

Facilitating tolerance of conflict

Blocking the role of ED as a mediator of family conflict

Putative mechanism of change

Raising parental anxiety to promote control of eating

Strengthening parental executive system

Changing parental sense of self-efficacy

Block role of ED as mediator of relationships

Putative mechanism of change

Changing the meaning of feeding the child from control to caring

Changing behavior around eating and reversing effects of starvation

Addressing maintenance factors (e.g. intolerance of uncertainty)

Addressing relational/attachment issues where necessary

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Lock et al., (2001). Treatment manual for anorexia nervosa: A family-based approach. New York. *Guilford Press*, **19**, 291-304.

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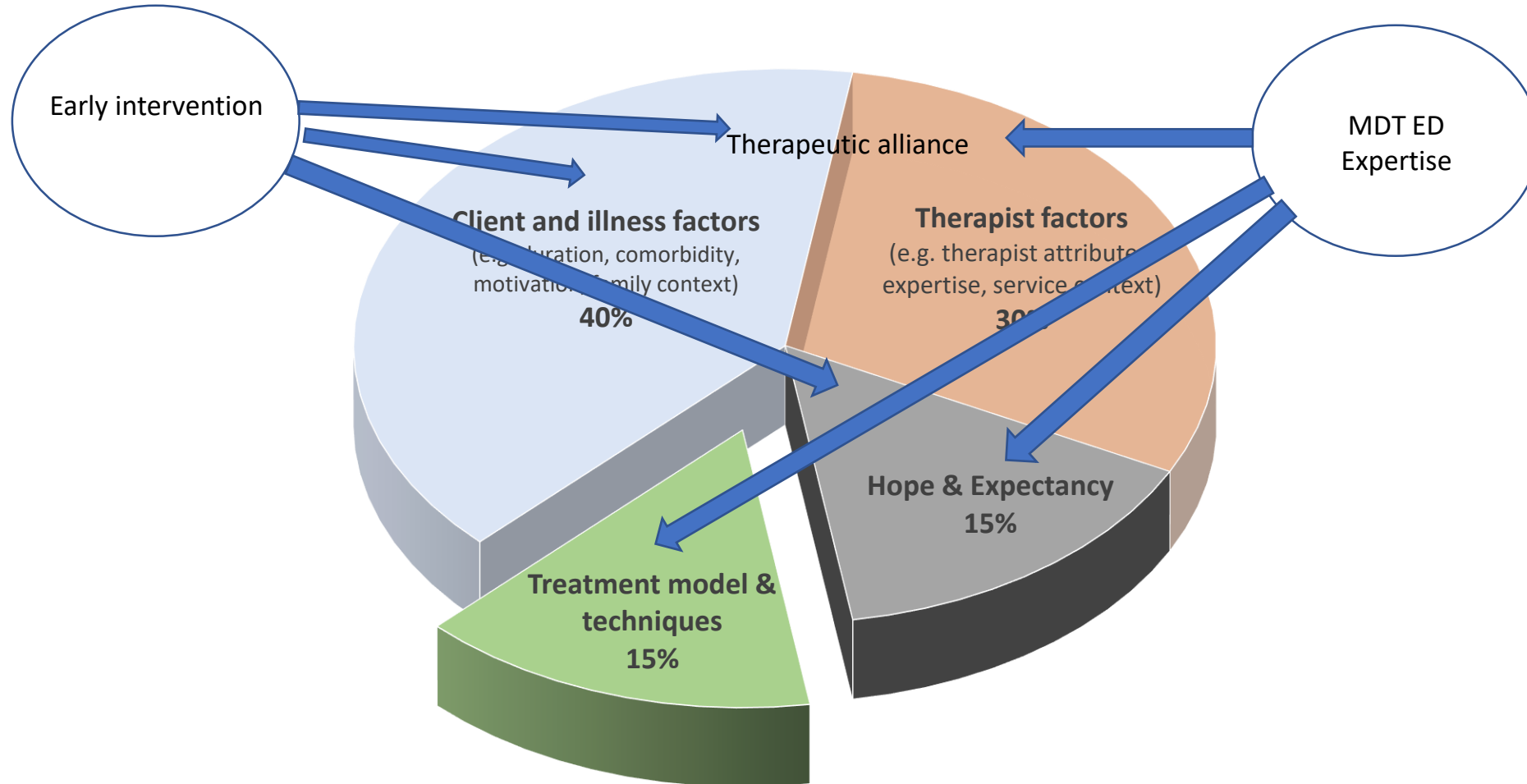
Short term versus long term goals

.... [the technique of] **anxiety induction** is a powerful way of developing a focus within which the parents are consistently addressed as the responsible, **executive subsystem** of the family. This facilitates the development of an appropriate **hierarchically structured control** system within the family. At the same time, the parental couple also differentiate themselves from the child or children subsystem [...] achieved when the parents **are able to take control** of their daughter's eating ...

This **expresses their separateness** from their child in an age-appropriate way and thus, paradoxically, the very act of taking control actually **enhances the process of differentiation**. This differentiation is crucial both for the development of the adolescent as an individual and also for the adaptation of the family

a theory of change in FT-AN

The role of extra-therapy factors



(Some elements of) a theory of change in FT-AN

Treatment context	Intervention	Initial goals	Medium t. goals	Longer t. goals	Predisposing/ maintenance factors	Relational frame
<i>Team/service characteristics</i> MD expertise Treatment philosophy Referral process	Assessment of medical risk	Creating a safe base for treatment	Changes in eating behaviours leading to improved nutrition	Increase tolerance of uncertainty		Dependent relationship early in treatment (family/therapist)
	Psychoeducation about the effects of starvation	Hope Expectancy		Reduction of effects of starvation	Intolerance of uncertainty	Dependent relationship early in treatment (parents/child)
<i>Therapist characteristics</i> Expertise Warmth Empathy Congruence	Externalising conversations	Reduction in guilt and blame	Reduction of effects of starvation	Changes in self-perception and self-esteem	Anxiety	
	Engagement with whole family incl. young person	Family shared sense of purpose	Changes in parental sense of self-efficacy and locus of control	Taking responsibility for future progress	Achievement orientation	Shift in therapeutic relationship later in treatment paralleled by change in parent child relationship
Difference in family and therapist time frame	Reframe meaning of feeding	Activation of parenting pattern	Motivation to change		Hostile critical relationships	
		Shift in locus of control			Insecure attachment relationships	

What is missing from the above account

- A lot
- Empirical evidence
- Having appropriate measures of mediating mechanisms
- Understanding where the neurobiological predispositions fit
- Understanding of the “roadblocks” when therapy does not work
- Understanding how the process of change overcoming “roadblocks”
- And a great deal more