



Reaching Through Resistance: Advanced Psychotherapy Techniques

By Allan Abbass, MD



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About half of all psychotherapy clients have little to no response or can even worsen in treatment. Why? They unknowingly use treatment-defeating behaviors, or resistances, that prevent emotional closeness and successful collaboration with the therapist.

Reaching through Resistance will help you

- Detect treatment resistance from the first client contact
- Understand the emotional factors behind resistance
- Discern various degrees and forms of resistance
- Recognize signs of anxiety in the body
- Activate and monitor unprocessed, unconscious impulses and feelings turn a client against his/her long-held defeating behaviors
- Regulate intense anxiety when emotions are activated
- Mobilize the client's unconscious wish to become well recognize signs of a powerful healing force: the unconscious therapeutic alliance

By detecting avoidance patterns and using specific interventions developed to handle them, you can empower a collaborative, vigorous treatment alliance with your client.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The reader will find numerous clinical vignettes showing how to put theory into practice that leads to enduring change. This model of work is showing some of the most impressive outcomes in psychotherapy research today. If you want to know how to do clinical work that leads to change, this book is essential reading."

--David Malan, DM, FRCPsych

"This masterpiece of clinical acumen and sophisticated technique comes from the researcher-clinician who has done the most to establish empirical backing for short-term dynamic psychotherapy. Allan Abbass has spelled out, with the skillful use of fascinating case material, the principles underlying the practice of Davanloo's intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy. In exceptionally clear prose, he demonstrates how one can reach behind the resistances of even the most repressed and fragile character types and offer them genuine, lasting change. This book is a gold mine of clinical insight."

—Stanley B. Messer, PhD, Dean and Distinguished Professor, Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Rutgers University

"What a volume! Allan Abbass has masterfully integrated the work of his mentors with his own research, theory, and clinical learning into an organized and graceful approach to short-term psychotherapy for people we all see in psychotherapy. Ultimately, the book is practical and clear in its recommended psychotherapeutic approach that is supported by both theory and empirical research. It is also rich in clinical examples. Dr. Abbass's ideas are very helpful to practitioners of all levels."

—Raymond A. Levy, PsyD, Clinical Director, Massachusetts General Hospital Psychotherapy Research Program, Harvard University

"In his book, *Reaching through Resistance: Advanced Psychotherapy Techniques*, the internationally recognized master clinician and researcher Dr. Allan Abbass offers readers one of the most clearly articulated descriptions of how to conduct intensive psychotherapy. This volume presents an in-depth view of the process and techniques of psychotherapy with a broad spectrum of clinical presentations. Using extensive case material and clear descriptions of the technique and process, Abbass demonstrates how to expertly transform the lives of those suffering with crippling psychological disturbances. A must-read for psychotherapists who want to improve their effectiveness and reach the most treatment refractory patients."

—Jeffrey J. Magnavita, PhD, ABPP, Past President, Society for the Advancement of Psychotherapy, and coeditor of the *Journal of Unified*

Psychotherapy and Clinical Science "Dr. Abbass makes an important contribution to the clinician's understanding of the Intensive Dynamic Short Term Psychotherapy (ISTDP) treatment model, through a well-written and presented book, rich with clinical material based on extensive experience and research. The book provides substantial support to the clinician engaged in treating the ever-increasing population of persons with psychosomatic symptoms."

—John E. Sarno, MD, Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine, NYU School of Medicine

"Reaching through Resistance belongs in every psychotherapist's library. In a tone notable for its respect for the struggles of patients and those who try to help them, Allan Abbass systematically explores the theoretical

foundations of intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy, illustrates its implementation with verbatim clinical material, and reviews the extensive empirical support for this approach. Unlike therapists who are good at what they do but not so good at communicating it, Abbass is an outstanding teacher. Readers will emerge from their engagement with this masterwork not only with a greater understanding of the phenomenon of resistance but also with much more skill in addressing it.”

—Nancy McWilliams PhD, ABPP, Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology

“What occurs in the consulting room leads to change in the patient. Allan Abbass has spent twenty years developing an innovative perspective on engaging the patients, particularly difficult patients, including those who somatize and are initially not aware of their feelings and conflicts. His book is filled with wonderful examples of how to engage patients to lead them to the point where they have transformative experiences. He has recorded most of his work for many years, and the result is a treasure trove of examples, and of ideas generated from studying them. I found myself, an experienced psychoanalyst, enriched by his conceptualizations of when and how to communicate with patients, depending on a careful estimate of the state of the patients’ feelings, defenses, vulnerability, and transference. He illustrates with admirable clarity the purpose of his remarks and their immediate consequences in improving the patients’ awareness of their distress, with immediate benefit to their coping skills. Dr. Abbass’s work springs from a profound and nuanced psychoanalytic understanding of his patients, combined with a highly innovative approach to engaging patients in corrective emotional experiences. He does not hesitate to focus in a powerful way on the feelings patients only hint at that are occurring in the consulting room. The result is astonishing: a high percentage of patients helped substantially in forty sessions or less—and the easier ones in many fewer sessions. I came away wishing that I had read this book twenty years ago—it would have helped me be more effective with my patients. This revolutionary book will richly repay those who devote their time to really study it.”

—Sherwood Waldron, MD, Chair, Psychoanalytic Research Consortium

“One of the perennial problems for psychotherapists is the paradoxical situation in which the patient often resists the help offered by the therapist. In this superb new volume, Allan Abbass provides a systematic approach to dealing with that inevitable resistance. Both beginning and advanced therapists will benefit from the clinical wisdom in these pages.”

—Glen O. Gabbard, MD, author of *Long-Term Psychodynamic Psychotherapy: A Basic Text*

"This is a wonderful book on how to work to reach toward people beneath their blocks and encourage maximal treatment engagement. Filled with both theoretical innovations and a myriad of interventions you can use to help patients build psychological strength, become more relationally competent, and process difficult feelings, this book will help you be a more effective therapist.”

—Leslie S. Greenberg, Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus, Department of Psychology, York University

“Using compelling clinical illustrations, Dr. Abbass has crafted a conceptually rich, empirically robust, and technically clear guide to the practice of intensive short term psychotherapy.

—Molyn Leszcz, MD, FRCPC, Professor and Interim Chair, Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto

“In *Reaching through Resistance*, Dr. Allan Abbass presents a host of refined techniques designed to assess and treat the resistances that all too frequently undermine treatment efforts. Since we are still failing to help almost 50 percent of the patients who seek psychotherapy, this book is desperately needed in our field. Written in clear language, this volume is packed with research data, as well as detailed illustrations and case vignettes that bring the concepts to life. Not for the novice or the faint of heart, this is a sophisticated text for therapists who, like Abbass himself, are dedicated to going all out to help even the most troubled and

treatment-resistant patients. It is ultimately a book of hope.”

—Patricia Coughlin, PhD, Clinical Professor, UNM School of Medicine, author of *Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy*, and coauthor of *Lives Transformed*

“Abbass presents in clear and jargon-free prose an approach to therapy that some may find congenial, some may find challenging, and many will experience as a highly stimulating blend of both. Richly illustrated with clinical detail, the book presents an active version of psychodynamic therapy that has been tested in the crucible of systematic research.”

—Paul L. Wachtel, PhD, Distinguished Professor, Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology, City University of New York

“Allan Abbass unveils his process of conducting ISTDP by providing clear and concise guidelines that are useful to the beginner, intermediate, and master clinician. He presents vignettes from psychotherapy sessions for almost any scenario a therapist and patient might face together when working deeply with emotions. This book is a must-read for learning the art and science of ISTDP!”

—Kristin A. R. Osborn, MA, LMHC, Harvard Medical School, and President, International Experiential Dynamic Therapy Association

“Many patients do not respond to an appropriate course of therapy. In this book, Dr. Allan Abbass describes a systematic way to address such cases of ‘treatment resistance.’ I particularly liked the detailed case vignettes, which illustrate how to connect to the person who is suffering beneath the symptoms.”

—Michael Thase, MD

“Abbass has presented an approach to short-term psychodynamic psychotherapy that is both sophisticated and readable. The copious use of case material adds to the interest and accessibility of the book.”

—George Stricker, PhD, Professor, American School of Professional Psychology, Argosy University, Washington DC

“In *Reaching through Resistance: Advanced Psychotherapy Techniques*, Dr. Abbass offers a model of understanding early attachment patterns, trauma, emotions, anxiety, and bodily reactions in psychotherapy. In addition, he discusses a range of specific techniques for intervening with these issues. I believe the most significant feature of this volume is the very extensive and detailed verbatim clinical vignettes that are provided throughout as examples for the various technical discussions. In fact, I would say this book provides some of the most extensive clinical vignettes used to illustrate the many varied technical interventions presented that I have ever seen. This provides readers with a very clear understanding of how they might intervene in relation to the model of therapy being presented, which makes the book a useful resource for clinicians at any level of experience.”

—Mark Hilsenroth, Professor, Adelphi University

“Dr. Allan Abbass is a giant in the field of short-term dynamic therapy, and this book is a tour de force. The combination of detailed cases and comprehensive explanatory material from a preeminent researcher and teacher makes *Reaching through Resistance* a must-read.”

—Howard Schubiner, MD, author of *Unlearn Your Pain*; Director, Mind-Body Program, Providence Hospital, Southfield, Michigan; and Clinical Professor, Wayne State University

“In the tradition of Davanloo and Malan, Abbass is exploring methods to rapidly get beyond resistance to modify central conflicts. The intense focus on the current relationship between therapist and patient provides an avenue for both assessment of levels of pathology and change.”

—John F. Clarkin, Clinical Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry, Weill Cornell Medical College

"In *Reaching through Resistance*, Allan Abbass, MD, a master clinician, provides the reader with a crisp

rendition of the setting of intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy and then gently rains a lovely series of illustrative examples of how an astute clinician can accurately pace the patient and use the scaffolding erected by what feels like resistance as a guide to relieving the double-binds and internal admonitions of troubled people who have been hobbled by unconscious self-protective strategies gone awry. Both newly minted and experienced ISTDP psychotherapists will find Reaching a satisfying thesaurus of what could be said in the thick of intense engagements that both respect the patient's adaptive defenses and helps the patient join the clinician in putting them aside and growing. I highly recommend Reaching through Resistance.”

—Richard A. Chefetz, MD, private practice, Washington, DC, author of Intensive Psychotherapy for Persistent Dissociative Processes

About the Author

ALLAN ABBASS, MD, is a psychiatrist, teacher, and researcher. He is a professor of psychiatry and psychology at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada. He is a highly sought-after consultant, speaker, and clinical supervisor in North America and Europe.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Phillip Permenter:

Do you have favorite book? Should you have, what is your favorite's book? Reserve is very important thing for us to know everything in the world. Each guide has different aim or perhaps goal; it means that publication has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their time to read a book. They may be reading whatever they have because their hobby is reading a book. Why not the person who don't like studying a book? Sometime, person feel need book if they found difficult problem or perhaps exercise. Well, probably you should have this Reaching Through Resistance: Advanced Psychotherapy Techniques.

Dora Gourley:

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take more information. It is quite advantages for you. The guide Reaching Through Resistance: Advanced Psychotherapy Techniques is not only giving you far more new information but also to become your friend when you truly feel bored. You can spend your current spend time to read your publication. Try to make relationship using the book Reaching Through Resistance: Advanced Psychotherapy Techniques. You never sense lose out for everything should you read some books.

Liza Serrano:

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