

Objective: Empirical literature on the interpersonal reactions elicited by exposure to a depressed individual identified two basic reactions: depressed mood induction and rejection of the depressed person. Relatively not many empirical studies is devoted to the topic of therapists' own experiences when working with depressive clients, although working with depressive clients burdens therapists themselves significantly. This study explores how therapists experience psychotherapy sessions with a currently depressive client and presents a processual theoretical model of the researched phenomenon.

Method: Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with 30 therapists of various theoretical orientations, yielding a set of 22 in-session event descriptions. The grounded theory method was used as a methodological framework for the analysis.

Results: The therapists' experience was conceptualized as *Experiential oscillation* between gravitating towards a client's depressive experience and moving away from it. It's evolvement over the course of a session is depicted by a model of *Depression Co-experiencing Trajectory* with six phases: 1. Sharing depressive experience, 2. Turning to oneself, 3. Striving for symptom change, 4. Distancing from depressive experience, 5. Turning to a client, 6. Focusing on relationship.

Conclusions: The resultant model can be used to organize existing empirical and theoretical literature on the topic by interconnecting different therapists' emotional responses within a coherent process model, which allows to track the changes in therapists' experiences, to name the relations between them and to connect them with the therapy's in-session micro-processes.