Hope for Treatment-Resistant Depression

A Sensorimotor Approach to Change

JANINA FISHER

The very nature of depression often thwarts efforts to treat it. After all, it’s difficult to change when you have no energy, no hope, and no capacity to concentrate. How can we challenge these chronic states? Using interventions from Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, this workshop will introduce ways to help clients relate to their depressive symptoms mindfully, rather than identifying with them, and to manage physical symptoms through changes in posture, breath, and energy. You’ll discover how to:

- Help clients separate depressive thoughts from physical symptoms so that each can be treated separately
- Counter cognitive beliefs that reinforce depressive states by experimenting with new words, new actions, and new habits
- Use body-centered interventions, such as movement, to increase energy and focus in depressed clients
- Facilitate development of an “antidepressant lifestyle” rather than habitual engagement in the opposite

Janina Fisher, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist and instructor at the Trauma Center in Boston, a senior faculty member of the Sensorimotor Psychotherapy Institute, and a former instructor at Harvard Medical School.
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**Learning objectives:**

1. Differentiate to clients about depression as a somatic state, not just a psychological state.
2. Determine cognitive schemas that reinforce depressive states to improve client outcomes.
3. Appraise a Sensorimotor Psychotherapy approach to understanding depression.
4. Assess three body-centered interventions that increase energy and focus in depressed clients.
5. Evaluate Sensorimotor interventions that transform depressive beliefs.
6. Evaluate the use of the social engagement system and its role in evoking an internal sense of safety as it relates to treatment.

**Outline:**

Explain to clients about depression as a somatic state, not just a psychological state.
- Depression and the nervous system
- How depression aids survival in childhood

Identify cognitive schemas that reinforce depressive states to improve client outcomes.
- Making meaning of depressive feelings and states
- How negative beliefs affect the body and nervous system

Describe a Sensorimotor Psychotherapy approach to understanding depression.
- Teaching clients to become curious and interested
- Studying the interaction of thoughts, feelings and body reactions

Identify three body-centered interventions that increase energy and focus in depressed clients.
- Experimenting with movement and posture
- Techniques for increasing energy in the body

Explore Sensorimotor interventions that transform depressive beliefs.
- Beliefs condition the body
- The body conditions and reinforces beliefs

Discuss the use of the social engagement system and its role in evoking an internal sense of safety as it relates to treatment.
- The social engagement system as a neural or somatic system
- How therapists can make use of somatic communication to enhance therapeutic effectiveness

**References:**


