

What a century of research on counseling has taught us: The surprising power of the individual therapist – Professor Michael Lambert

What is effective psychotherapy?

Research has shown that the clients motivation to get well contributes **40%** to therapy effectiveness, **35%** is due to common factors, **20%** is due to therapist differences, and only **5%** is due to the techniques used (there is no reliable difference between techniques).

Care, respect, and empathy shown by the counselor are consistently shown to be the most important contributors to successful outcomes after the clients own motivation to succeed!

We as therapists are at the bottom of the support list. We are the 'safety net' and the possibility of change is heightened immensely when clients get to us. Expectations are high and the need is high. We are sanctioned to heal and their crises can lead to change.

Implications of research findings suggest the need to focus on individual providers to maximize their contribution to client outcomes.

How many sessions are necessary?

Hansen, Lambert, and Forman (2002)¹ in a review of many research studies, looked at how effective psychotherapy is. They found:

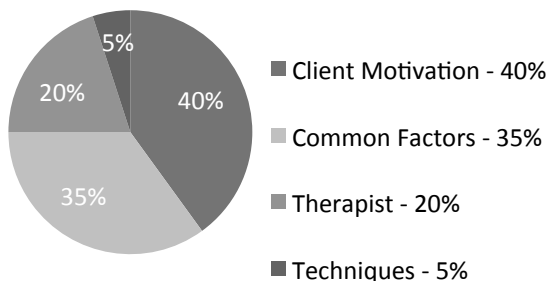
- 10-20% improved after 3-6 sessions
- 50% improved after 7-9 sessions
- 40-60% clients improved after 12-15 sessions
- 50% improved after 13-20 sessions.
- Some clients are too damaged to bring back to 100% normal functioning so they argue there should a ceiling on outcomes of about 20 sessions.

Early treatment response:

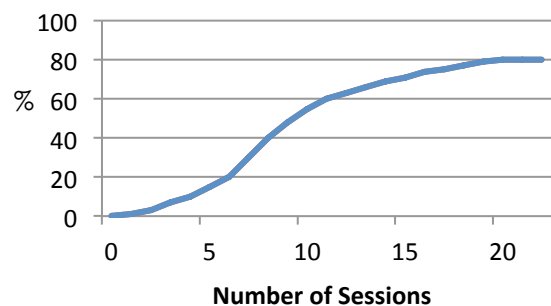
Some clients change on their first connection with the therapist - these are called 'rapid responders'. Some rapid responders show improvement by their third session. It is not about technique! Therapist effects are dramatic.

Lambert argues that practice should not be limited to empirically supported psychotherapies because **there are no superior outcomes for particular treatments.** Severity of condition determines outcomes for clients, and poor social support diminishes outcomes. The client MUST BE UNDERSTOOD!

Contributions to Effectiveness



Dore- Response Curve



¹ Hansen, N., Lambert, M., & Forman, E. (2002). The psychotherapy dose-response effect and its implications for treatment delivery services. . Clinical Psychology: Science & Practice, 9, 329-343