

**RICHARD GEIST**

**Empathy, Connectedness, and the Evolution of Boundaries in Self Psychological Treatment**

This paper discusses the evolution of non-linear boundaries in the therapeutic dyad when we work from a self-psychological, connectedness sensibility. Using verbatim material from a session with a borderline, fragmentation prone and at times rageful patient, the paper argues that boundaries should evolve so that they embrace a form and shape whose structure will provide the relationship with a depth and connectedness that is in the service of enhancing the patient's self organization. The paper emphasizes four important facets of boundaries.

First, it discusses how many analysts mistakenly interpret the patient's boundary challenging behavior as provocative rather than as an attempt to explore the intricacies and potential intimacy of the dyad and thus promote iatrogenic disjunctions that disrupt the therapeutic journey.

Second, it delineates the difference between boundaries and safety in a dyadic system. What the patient requires for successful treatment is a secure feeling of safety. Setting explicit boundaries from the outside is not the same as providing a safe milieu that facilitates the healthy emergence of boundaries from within the patient-analyst dyad.

Third, it considers the issue of physical touch and boundaries, and how wishes for physical contact with the analyst reflect the search for heightened affective moments that were absent in the patient's original development.

Finally, the paper discusses how the mutual evolution of boundaries catalyzes affective regulatory structures within the patient while concurrently strengthening and reorganizing the analyst's self organization.

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