



American
Board of
Psychoanalysis

The Abridged Version: Psychoanalytic Core Competencies

Category I – How Analyst Approaches Psychoanalytic Treatment

1. Analytic Mind and Attitude (3,7)**

The analyst has a patient, non-judgmental, and neutral attitude of curiosity and open-mindedness; is flexible and self-reflective; is open to learning from/about patient; is emotionally open and attuned; is tolerant of uncertainty; and attends to what is not consciously available to the patient when listening to the patient.

Category II – Knowledge

2. Theory and Application of Psychoanalytic Knowledge**

The analyst has a broad knowledge of psychoanalytic theory and practice including a variety of theoretical schools, key constructs, and contemporary thinking related to the social world and systemic inequities.

Category III – Assessment

3. Diagnosis, Assessment, and Formulation (1)

Initially, the analyst uses a broad and open-ended evaluation of the reasons for seeking treatment, assessing ego strengths, capacities, weaknesses, and character organization; makes an initial formulation that considers variable presentations and external factors, and considers whether analysis may be the preferred treatment. With **ongoing** assessments, the analyst makes solid theoretical formulations that inform interventions, and considers alternative hypotheses, the interplay of intrapsychic and contextual factors, relational patterns, impediments to progress, and readiness for termination.

Category IV – Elements of Psychoanalytic Treatment (4)

4. Ethics (10)

The analyst maintains a professional identity, demonstrating integrity and self-reflection; shows willingness to seek consultation; attends to confidentiality protections; reflects on competing ethical principles; and considers the impact of external supervision or treatment.

5. Frame

The analyst can establish and maintain an attitudinal and procedural frame, engage alterations of the frame and resistances inherent in work with the external frame, and understands the value of internal frame and the impact of confidentiality on the frame.

6. Focus on Unconscious (4)

The analyst attends to what is not consciously available to the patient and themselves and engages in symbolic thinking and self-reflection. The analyst shows sensitivity to the multiple meanings and purposes of affects and attitudes, enables the patient to recognize and accept the reality and influence of unconscious inner life, and explores the way external factors may have had an impact on the inner workings of the patient's mind.

7. Affect Tolerance and Management

The analyst tolerates and remains curious and reflective in face of powerful feelings and content within the patient and the analyst, bears witness to painful realities, memories, and subjective experiences, and engages with the patient to understand, maintaining appropriate affective involvement.

8. Attunement & Development of Complex Relationship (3,4,7)

The analyst responds with attunement, empathy and tact, reflecting on their own impact on the patient, facilitating exploration of the patient's experience, thus enabling the development of a relationship that is safe, neither too close nor distant, that can move between states of empathic immersion, rupture, and repair, which allows the analytic work to proceed.

9. Deepening Treatment & Analytic Process (8,6)

The analyst recognizes defenses that, while protective, interfere with knowing and uses them to facilitate their own and the patient's understanding of the patient. Deepening of the treatment is seen by elaborated transferences, a more complex understanding of how the external and internal impact each other, and a move to the internal world. The analyst shows enhanced capacities for self-reflection, understanding and functioning, with fluidity in moving between empathy, identification, and separateness. The analyst can convey the story of how the patient's life unfolds within the analysis and through the analytic work.

10. Transference (5)

The analyst recognizes the ongoing utility of transference in informing the process, facilitates and perseveres with manifold and/or intense transferences which lead to an increasing depth of material, and interprets within the transference. The analyst understands the role of ancillary treatments on the multiple possible transferences and reflects on the transference as it relates to identity characteristics of both members of the dyad and how these affect the analytic process.

11. Countertransference (7)

The analyst has an awareness that the analyst's reactions to the patient can be important ongoing sources of information about the patient and the analytic interaction, used to further the work, without prioritizing the analyst's own needs. The analyst understands countertransference experiences as they relate to identity characteristics of both members of the dyad and how these affect the analytic process.

12. Enactments

The analyst demonstrates the ability to identify, understand and work through the components and meanings of inevitable enactments, expanding the patient's conscious awareness of their nuance, benefits, and complexity, as they provide deeper information about unconscious processes at play for both members of the dyad. (6)

13. Termination (9)

The analyst shows the capacity to assess readiness for termination, to reflect on the nature, determinants, distinct components, dynamics, and impact of any termination, planned or interrupted, and understands the rationale and dynamics of post-analytic contact, if any.

Category V – Overall Consistency

14. Consistency and Coherence (13)

The analyst consistently demonstrates the competencies in the discussion of multiple cases and shows relative coherence in the application of theoretical knowledge and interventions within individual cases, even if thinking flexibly and changing approaches when the situation warrants.

Category VI – For Applicants for Child And Adolescent Certification

15. Child & Adolescent Specific Competencies

The analyst demonstrates:

Knowledge - An advanced knowledge of development including common developmental pathways and their variations, psychopathologies of childhood and adolescence, and the ability to formulate both a dynamic and developmental understanding of the child and adjust technique based on the developmental stage.

Parent Work - A nuanced capacity to work with parents as seen by understanding the foci and trajectory, developing and maintaining an alliance, managing countertransference and the frame.

Affect & Action - The capacity to recognize, tolerate, reflect on, understand, and manage a wide range of affects and actions in action-prone child and adolescent patients.

Therapeutic Play - The capacity to engage in therapeutic play as seen by the ability to create an appropriate setting at the appropriate developmental level, reflect on the communication provided by the play, and use the play for intervention.

Transference – An understanding of the aspects of transference unique to child work including work with transferences that may stir loyalty conflicts in the children and threaten the parents, and an understanding of the meaning of their role as a real object and a transference object, in the service of the child's development.

Countertransference – The ability to recognize and reflect on the countertransference reactions that children can stimulate, particularly parental transferences and countertransferences. The analyst tolerates and manages their countertransference reactions to people and situations in the child's life and intense affects and actions in the child.

Ethics – The maintenance of appropriate boundaries with the child and with the parents, particularly with regard to privacy and confidentiality of the child's material, and an understanding of legal obligations of communications outside of usual analytic boundaries, e.g., mandatory reporting.

**** ALL NEW competency categories, though they may have been subsumed or addressed under other categories in pre-existing list.**

**** Numbers in blue at end are where these competencies were addressed previously**

All items have diversity competencies from pre-existing competencies integrated, and can be seen in the detailed version



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