

## I The Therapeutic Relationship: A Nationwide Survey of Practitioners' Attitudes and Experiences

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**I Introduction:** While occupational therapy literature emphasizes the importance of the therapeutic relationship and the therapeutic use of self, few empirical studies have examined these phenomena.

**I Objective:** This survey study sought to describe practitioners' preparation for, attitudes toward, and experience of the therapeutic relationship and use of self.

**I Method:** The survey was mailed to a random sample of 1000 members of the American Occupational Therapy Association. Sixty-four percent responded and of these 568 met criteria for inclusion in the study.

**I Results:** Participants reported a high value for the therapeutic relationship and use of self, while a majority felt that they were inadequately trained and that the field lacks sufficient knowledge in these areas. Practitioners report frequent interpersonal challenges involving clients but at the same time care very much and have positive regard for their clients. Irrespective of practitioners' age, sex, experience level, setting, treatment intensity, and client impairment, those who placed higher value on use of self and had more training related to the therapeutic use of self were more likely to report interpersonal difficulties in clients. They were also more likely to report feelings of positive regard for their clients. Similarly, practitioners placing higher value on the therapeutic relationship and use of self were more likely to report concerns about clients.

**I Conclusion:** The study findings suggest that more attention needs to be paid to the therapeutic relationship and to the therapeutic use of self in education and in research.