

Transference & Countertransference: Recognize, Self-Check, Manage

A post-session checklist for therapists. A single item is human. A cluster, or the same item recurring across clients, is the signal worth taking to supervision.

RECOGNIZE · CLIENT

Transference warning signs

What is the client doing? Run this against your last session.

- Sudden affect shift** toward you mid-session, out of context.
- Idealization.** "You're the only one who gets it."
- Devaluation.** Sudden criticism of you, the room, the fee.
- A new, disproportionate emotion** never shown before.
- Mirroring an outside pattern** they came to therapy to change.
- Assumptions about your inner state.** "You're tired of this."
- Going quiet** in a way unlike them, after a vulnerable moment.
- Boundary testing.** Gifts, contact, personal questions.
- "You remind me of..."** The most overt form.
- Erotic or romantic feelings.** Normal; needs supervision.
- Cancellations clustered** around heavy sessions.
- Premature termination language** right after a hard session.

SELF-CHECK · YOU

Countertransference self-check

What are you doing? Run this after sessions that left a residue.

- I felt **dread** before the session.
- I felt **bored or sleepy**, unrelated to my own day.
- I found myself **rescuing**: advice I'd normally hold back.
- I **over-disclosed**, or wanted to.
- I felt **angry** with the client and unsure why.
- I felt **attracted**, or worked hard not to.
- I **thought about the client between sessions** unusually.
- I **bent a frame**: ran long, waived a fee, took a text.
- I felt **idealized** and noticed I liked it.
- I felt **criticized** and wanted to defend.
- I **avoided a topic** the client kept raising.
- I left feeling **drained, activated, or guilty**.
- I noticed I was **performing**: impressive, calm, wise.
- I had a **dream** about the client, or intrusive thoughts.

MANAGE IT

What to do with each

Transference (about the client): use it in the room.

- 1 **Notice and contain.** Do not interpret in the moment.
- 2 **Name what's observable.** "Something shifted just now."
- 3 **Explore the feeling in the room first.**
- 4 **Link to history** only when the alliance can hold it.
- 5 **Repair** if there's a rupture.

Countertransference (about you): take it out of the room.

- 1 **Self-reflection** between sessions (this checklist).
- 2 **Supervision.** Bring the exact moment, not a summary.
- 3 **Your own therapy** for recurring personal material.
- 4 **Mindfulness** in-session when the room activates.

Exam rule: transference → use with client.

Countertransference → supervision, not the client.

The pattern you can't see from memory. The dread on Tuesday, the rescuing on Friday, the frame you bent last month may be one pattern across clients, and you'd never connect them by recall alone. Alliance Genie™ reviews your session transcript the way a supervisor would, flags where countertransference shows up, and tracks it across clients so the recurring signals surface. It's built to sharpen your read of the room, not replace it, and can stand in as a reflective-practice layer when supervision isn't accessible.

Try Alliance Genie™ free at mentalyc.com/alliance-genie