

System for Observing Family Therapy Alliances

SOFTA-o (client)

DIRECTIONS: Please read the definition of each of the following four constructs. Then, on the coding pages, identify the family members to be rated in the top row. As you observe the session, mark each behavior that occurs in the appropriate column. At the conclusion of the session, use these marks to make a judgment about each family member's alliance on Engagement, Emotional Connection, and Safety. Rate the entire family system on Shared Sense of Purpose. Use the guidelines in the training manual to go from check marks to ratings. Note that items in italics reflect a lack of engagement, poor emotional connection, a lack of a shared sense of purpose, and a lack of safety.

Use the following ordinal scale:

- 3 = extremely problematic
- 2 = moderately problematic
- 1 = somewhat problematic
- 0 = unremarkable or neutral
- +1 = somewhat strong
- +2 = moderately strong
- +3 = extremely strong

<p>ENGAGEMENT IN THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS: the client viewing treatment as meaningful; a sense of being involved in therapy and working together with the therapist, that therapeutic goals and tasks in therapy can be discussed and negotiated with the therapist, that taking the process seriously is important, that change is possible</p>	<p>SAFETY WITHIN THE THERAPEUTIC SYSTEM the client viewing therapy as a place to take risks, be open, flexible; a sense of comfort and an expectation that new experiences and learning will take place, that good can come from being in therapy, that conflict within the family can be handled without harm, that one need not be defensive</p>
<p>EMOTIONAL CONNECTION TO THE THERAPIST: the client viewing the therapist as an important person in her/his life, almost like a family member; a sense that the relationship is based on affiliation, trust, caring, and concern; that the therapist genuinely cares and “is there” for the client, that he/she is on the same wavelength with the therapist (e.g., similar life perspectives, values), that the therapist’s wisdom and expertise are valuable</p>	<p>SHARED SENSE OF PURPOSE WITHIN THE FAMILY: family members seeing themselves as working collaboratively to improve family relations and achieve common family goals; a sense of solidarity in relation to the therapy (“we’re in this together”); that they value their time with each other in therapy; essentially, a felt unity within the family in relation to therapy</p>

FAMILY MEMBER

ENGAGEMENT IN THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS:

Client indicates agreement with the therapist's goals

Client describes or discusses a plan for improving
the situation

Client introduces a problem for discussion

Client agrees to do homework assignments

Client indicates having done homework or seeing it
as useful

Client expresses optimism or indicates that a
positive change has taken place

Client complies with therapist's request for
an enactment

Client leans forward

Client mentions the treatment, the therapeutic process,
or a specific session

Client expresses feeling "stuck," questions the value
*of therapy, or states that therapy is not / has not
been helpful*

*Client shows indifference about the tasks or process
of therapy (e.g., paying lip service, "I don't know,"
tuning out)*

Rate Engagement in the Process

-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

for each family member:

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION TO THE THERAPIST:

- | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Client shares a lighthearted moment or joke with the therapist | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Client verbalizes trust in the therapist | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Client expresses interest in the therapist's personal life | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Client indicates feeling understood or accepted by the therapist | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Client expresses physical affection or caring for the therapist | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Client mirrors the therapist's body posture | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <i>Client avoids eye contact with the therapist</i> | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <i>Client refuses or is reluctant to respond to the therapist</i> | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <i>Client has hostile or sarcastic interactions with the therapist</i> | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| <i>Client comments on the therapist's incompetence or inadequacy</i> | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Rate Emotional Connection to the Therapist **-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3**

for each family member: _____

SAFETY WITHIN THE THERAPEUTIC SYSTEM:

Client implies or states that therapy is a safe place	_____	_____	_____	_____
Client varies his/her emotional tone during the session	_____	_____	_____	_____
Client shows vulnerability (e.g., discusses painful feelings, cries)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Client has an open upper body posture	_____	_____	_____	_____
Client reveals a secret or something that other family members didn't know	_____	_____	_____	_____
Client encourages another family member to "open up" or to tell the truth	_____	_____	_____	_____
Client directly asks other family members for feedback about his/her behavior or about herself/himself as a person	_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Client expresses anxiety nonverbally (e.g., taps or shakes)</i>	_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Client protects self in nonverbal manner (e.g., crosses arms over chest, doesn't take off jacket or put down purse, sits far away from group, etc.)</i>	_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Client refuses or is reluctant to respond when directly addressed by another family member</i>	_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Client responds defensively to another family member</i>	_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Client makes an uneasy/anxious reference to the camera, observation, supervisor, or research procedures</i>	_____	_____	_____	_____

Rate Safety within the Therapeutic System **-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3**

for each family member: _____

SHARED SENSE OF PURPOSE WITHIN THE FAMILY:

Family members offer to compromise	_____	_____	_____	_____
Family members share a joke or a lighthearted moment with each other	_____	_____	_____	_____
Family members ask each other for their perspective	_____	_____	_____	_____
Family members validate each other's point of view	_____	_____	_____	_____
Family members mirror each other's body posture	_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Family members avoid eye contact with each other</i>	_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Family members blame each other</i>	_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Family members devalue each other's opinions or perspective</i>	_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Family members try to align with the therapist against each other</i>	_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Client makes hostile or sarcastic comments to family members</i>	_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Family members disagree with each other about the value, purpose, goals, or tasks of therapy or about who should be included in the sessions</i>	_____	_____	_____	_____

Rate Shared Sense of Purpose within the Family **-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3**

for the family as a whole:

System for Observing Family Therapy Alliances

SOFTA-o (therapist)

DIRECTIONS: Please read the definition of each of the following four constructs. As you observe the session, mark each behavior as it occurs. At the conclusion of the session, use these marks to make a judgment about the therapist's contribution to Engagement, Emotional Connection, Safety, and the family's Shared Sense of Purpose. Use the guidelines in the training manual to go from check marks to ratings. Note that items in italics reflect negative contributions to engagement, emotional connection, a shared sense of purpose, and safety.

Use the following ordinal scale:

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-1 = somewhat problematic

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<p>ENGAGEMENT IN THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS: the client viewing treatment as meaningful; a sense of being involved in therapy and working together with the therapist, that therapeutic goals and tasks in therapy can be discussed and negotiated with the therapist, that taking the process seriously is important, that change is possible</p>	<p>SAFETY WITHIN THE THERAPEUTIC SYSTEM the client viewing therapy as a place to take risks, be open, flexible; a sense of comfort and an expectation that new experiences and learning will take place, that good can come from being in therapy, that conflict within the family can be handled without harm, that one need not be defensive</p>
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CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENGAGEMENT IN THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS:

Therapist explains how therapy works. _____

*Therapist ask client(s) what they want to talk about in the session. _____

*Therapist encourages client(s) to articulate their goals for therapy. _____

Therapist asks client(s) whether they are willing to do a specific in-session task (e.g., enactment). _____

*Therapist asks client(s) whether they are willing to follow a specific suggestion or do a specific homework assignment. _____

*Therapist asks client(s) about the impact or value of a prior homework assignment. _____

*Therapist expresses optimism or notes that a positive change has taken place or can take place. _____

Therapist pulls in quiet client(s) (e.g., by deliberately leaning forward, calling them by name, addressing them specifically). _____

Therapist asks if the client(s) have any questions. _____

Therapist praises client motivation for engagement or change. _____

Therapist defines therapeutic goals or imposes tasks or procedures without asking the client(s) for their collaboration. _____

**Therapist argues with the client(s) about the nature, purpose, or value of therapy.* _____

Therapist shames or criticizes how clients did (or did not do) a prior homework assignment. _____

Rate therapist contribution to Engagement: -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

THERAPIST CONTRIBUTIONS TO SAFETY WITHIN THE THERAPEUTIC SYSTEM:

*Therapist acknowledges that therapy involves taking risks
or discussing private matters. _____

Therapist provides structure and guidelines for safety
and confidentiality. _____

*Therapist invites discussion about intimidating elements in the
therapeutic context (e.g., recording equipment, reports to third
parties, treatment team observation,
one-way mirror, research, etc.). _____

Therapist helps clients to talk truthfully and
nondefensively with each other. _____

Therapist attempts to contain, control, or manage
overt hostility between clients. _____

Therapist actively protects one family member
from another (e.g., from blame, hostility,
or emotional intrusiveness). _____

Therapist changes the topic to something pleasurable
or non-anxiety arousing (e.g., small talk about
the weather, room decor, TV shows, etc.)
when there seems to be tension or anxiety. _____

Therapist asks one client (or a subgroup of clients) to leave
the room in order to see one client alone for a
portion of the session. _____

*Therapist allows family conflict to escalate to verbal abuse,
threats, or intimidation.* _____

*Therapist does not attend to overt expressions of client
vulnerability (e.g., crying, defensiveness).* _____

Rate therapist contribution to Safety: -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

THERAPIST CONTRIBUTIONS TO A SHARED SENSE OF PURPOSE WITHIN THE FAMILY:

*Therapist encourages clients to
compromise with each other. _____

*Therapist encourages clients to ask each
other for their perspective. _____

*Therapist praises clients for respecting each
other's point of view. _____

Therapist emphasizes commonalities among clients'
perspectives on the problem or solution. _____

Therapist draws attention to clients' shared values,
experiences, needs, or feelings. _____

Therapist encourages clients to show caring, concern,
or support for each other. _____

*Therapist encourages client(s) to ask each
other for feedback. _____

**Therapist fails to intervene when family members argue
with each other about the goals, value, or
need for therapy.* _____

**Therapist fails to address one client's stated concerns
by only discussing another client's concerns.* _____

Rate therapist contribution to Shared Purpose: -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

**indicates a similar item in the client version*



Date: _____

Raters: _____

Tape #: _____

Family	Rater #1	Rater#2	Rater #3	Rater #4	CONSENSUS
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Member	_____	_____	_____	_____	
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Engagement					
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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Safety

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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Emotional Connection

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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Shared Sense of Purpose

Entire Family	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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Comments/Concerns:
