



## Affect Phobia Therapy

**Affect Phobia** (fear of feelings) is the unifying concept behind **Affect Phobia Therapy**, a powerful form of psychotherapy which has grown out of decades of research on Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy that have demonstrated encouraging results (for a comprehensive review, see Osborn et al, 2014).

**Affect Phobia Therapy** (APT) is based on the premise that internal conflicts about feelings underlie most psychologically-based disorders. It is an integrative model of short term dynamic psychotherapy (STDP) that was developed by Harvard Medical School psychologist and researcher, Leigh McCullough (McCullough-Valiant, 1997). It integrates techniques from psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, and experiential therapies into a powerful whole that can increase the effectiveness of therapy and help it to proceed more rapidly.

**Affects** (the technical term for feelings or emotions) are the strongest motivators of human behavior. They can motivate healthy, adaptive behavior and they can

also lead to unhealthy, maladaptive behavior. When people are unable to use or respond to their emotions in healthy ways, they can develop symptoms and/or engage in patterns of maladaptive behavior. This inability to respond adaptively to emotion is usually unconscious, and is often referred to as “psychodynamic conflict,” but a key point of our work is that it can also be thought of as an **Affect Phobia**.

A person with a classical **phobia** such as a fear of elevators might hurt themselves by not taking a desirable job because it’s located in a tall building. Similarly, a person with a **phobia** about grief might avoid feelings of sadness by becoming angry instead, which can damage relationships and prevent them from doing necessary grief-work. Like classical phobias, **Affect Phobias** can be treated by “systematic desensitization” – helping the patient to experience progressively higher levels of the feared emotion, while reducing associated inhibitory feelings such as anxiety or shame.

**Kristin A. R. Osborn**, LMHC is a licensed mental health counselor and was trained by- and then trained others on behalf of Dr. Leigh McCullough, PhD, founder of Affect Phobia Therapy (APT). She founded the Certified APT™-Training Program in 2009 and presents internationally, offering ongoing training in Boston, London and Stockholm. She is a lecturer (part-time) in Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School (HMS) at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, is the Director of HMS Psychotherapy Research Program and has recently launched a research study on therapist affect phobia and its impact on patient outcome. Her passion is teaching clinicians how to integrate research in their clinical training and she developed the ATOS-Therapist Scale, Accessibility Scale, Congruent/Incongruent Scale and the Control Mastery Scale, which are featured in her book, *Paraverbal Communication in Psychotherapy: Beyond the Words*, Rowman & Littlefield (2016). Kristin is President of the International Experiential Dynamic Therapy Association (IEDTA), on



the advisory board of Stockholms Akademi for Psykhoterapiutbildning (SAPU) and a member of the continuing education faculty at William James College and RINO-Noord Holland. She has published articles and chapters on training clinicians including, *Learning how to rate video-recorded therapy sessions: A Practical Guide for Trainees & Advanced Clinicians*, Psychotherapy Journal (2011); *On-line Supervision in Affect Phobia Therapy, Using Technology to Enhance Counselor Supervision*, American Psychological Association (2016); and *Creating Change Through Focusing on Affect: Affect Phobia Therapy, Working on Emotions in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Techniques for Clinical Practice*, Guilford Press (2014).

*Heldagsseminar med Kristin Osborn*  
**“Transgenerational Affect Phobia:  
How to understand and treat symptoms  
passed on from generation to generation”**  
Stavanger Universitetssjukehus  
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