

Using AI to Scale Quality in the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Workforce

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Disclosure: I am a co-founder and in shareholder in Lyssn.io

We know empathy is foundational to the helping professions

> [Psychol Addict Behav](#). 2013 Sep;27(3):878-84. doi: 10.1037/a0030274. Epub 2012 Oct 1.

Is low therapist empathy toxic?

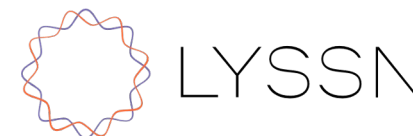
Theresa B Moyers ¹, William R Miller

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 23025709 PMCID: [PMC3558610](#) DOI: [10.1037/a0030274](#)

Abstract

One of the largest determinants of client outcomes is the counselor who provides treatment. Therapists often vary widely in effectiveness, even when delivering standardized manual-guided treatment. In particular, the therapeutic skill of accurate empathy originally described by Carl Rogers has been found to account for a meaningful proportion of variance in therapeutic alliance and in addiction treatment outcomes. High-empathy counselors appear to have higher success rates regardless of theoretical orientation. Low-empathy and confrontational counseling, in contrast, has been associated with higher drop-out and relapse rates, weaker therapeutic alliance, and less client change. The authors propose emphasis on empathic listening skills as an evidence-based practice in the hiring and training of counselors to improve outcomes and prevent harm in addiction treatment.



We know how to measure empathy

Empathy				
Low		High		
1	2	3	4	5
Clinician has no apparent interest in client's worldview. Gives little or no attention to the client's perspective.	Clinician makes sporadic efforts to explore the client's perspective. Clinicians' understanding may be inaccurate or may detract from the client's true meaning.	Clinician is actively trying to understand the client's perspective, with modest success.	Clinician shows evidence of accurate understanding of client's worldview. Makes active and repeated efforts to understand client's point of view. Understanding mostly limited to explicit content.	Clinician shows evidence of deep understanding of client's point of view, not just for what has been explicitly stated but what the client means but has not yet said.

We know how to reliably identify empathic communication

CLIENT

Yeah. I think I'm sad that I haven't seen my kids in a couple days. Like I really miss them and I'm pretty pissed that my neighbor like called the cops. I mean I was only gone for 10 minutes. Like I'm not I'm not a bad mom. Like I'm not one of those moms that like leaves her kids at home all day while she goes to work or like. Doesn't. Like I care about my kids a lot and I love them. And I just like I'm not a bad mom.

PROVIDER

Mm hmm (affirmative). Yeah. **It sounds like you've got some conflicting emotions going on. EMPATHIC** you're sad that they're not around but you're also frustrated that this would even happen in the first place. **EMPATHIC**



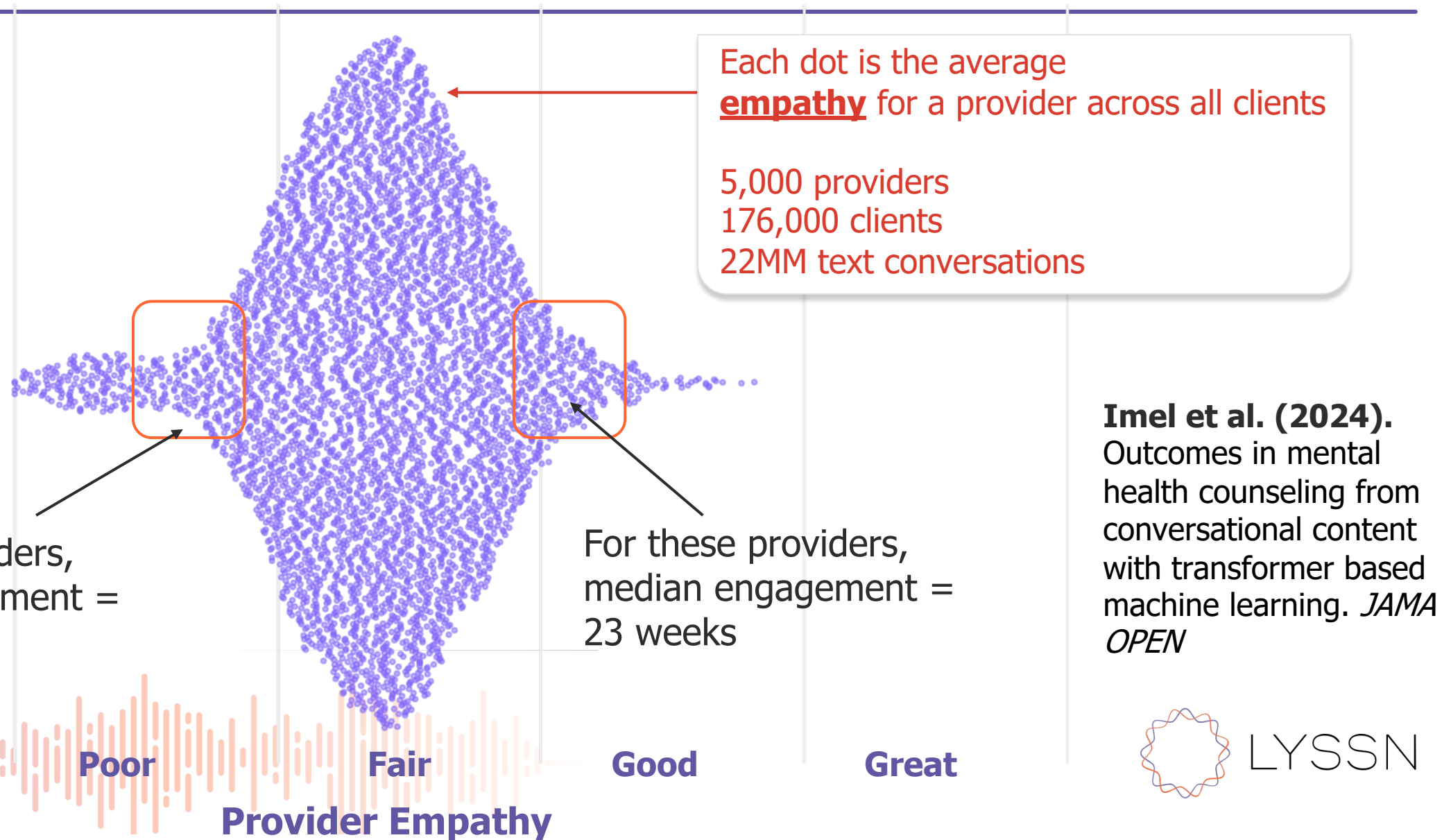
“Okay, so what’s the problem?”

300 million counseling sessions

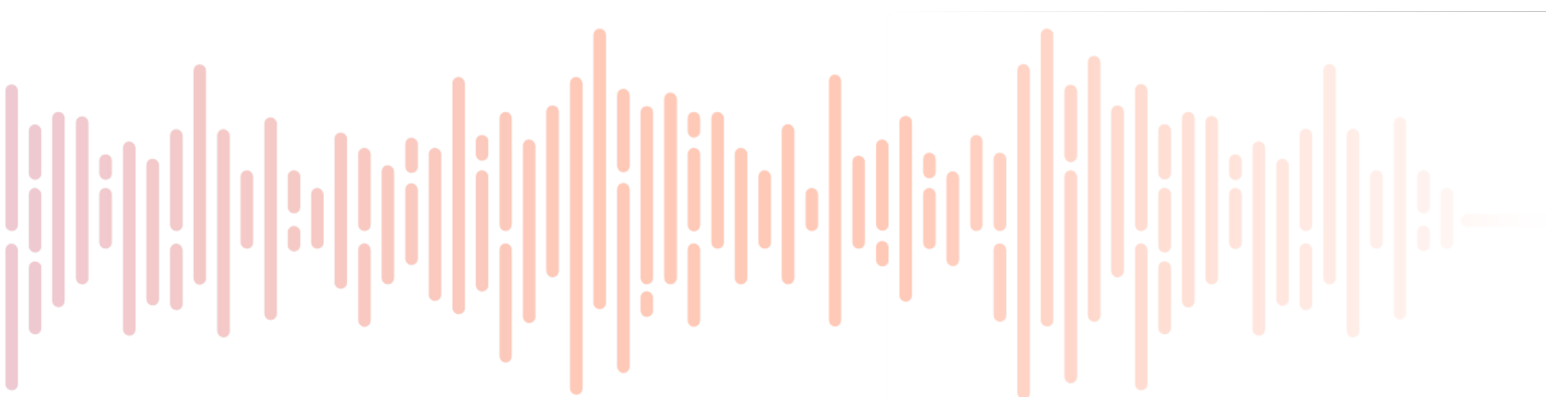
10 million 988 contacts



Workforce challenges: The problem we live with but never see



How do we learn new skills?



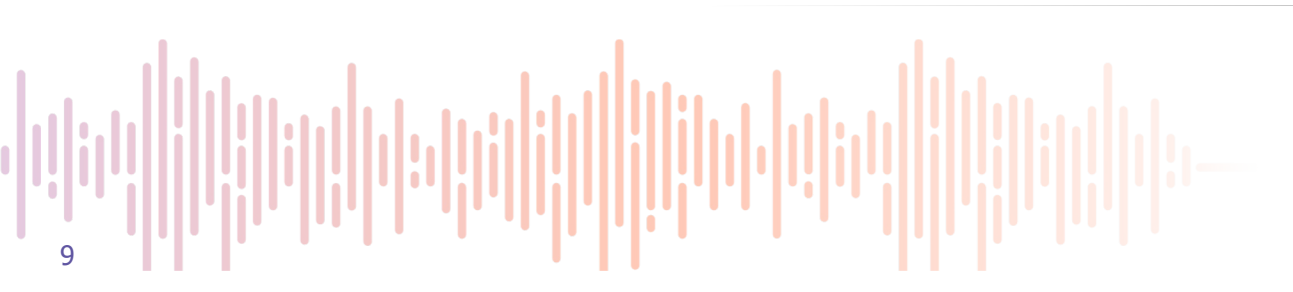
How we train *other* skills



1. Practice (lots)
2. Feedback
3. Practice small components

“The acquisition of skills requires a regular environment, an adequate **opportunity to practice**, and **rapid and unequivocal feedback** about the correctness of thoughts and actions.”

— Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*



In-person training with coaching and feedback is the gold standard... and totally infeasible

High training costs

Few expert trainers

High turnover

Time constraints

CQI is impractical

What we typically do: Provide content (without practice)



Slides and written content



Watch lectures and role play examples



CME quiz

Outcomes:

1. What content was offered
2. How many providers accessed content
3. Demonstration of knowledge via quiz

Nothing about quality of skills or skill development

“It was not a wholly unexpected finding. ***There is little empirical reason to believe that a one-shot training workshop would be sufficient to change durable practice behavior.*** The question, then, is how to enhance training so that broader changes are produced.”

— Bill Miller, *Founder of Motivational Interviewing*



Practice #1: Education about alcohol and the brain

Practice with your clients.

So there is your second tool: Exploring Questions that dig in to the client’s own motivation for change. Now it’s your turn to try!

Gabriella about



0:00 0:43



Watch

Learn

Practice



0:00 0:43




Record your response

0:00



Practice #2: Specific suggestions and advice

WatchLearnPractice




A video player interface showing a woman with dark hair wearing a dark red sweater, speaking against a dark background. The video is currently at the 0:00 mark out of 0:43. A play button is visible in the center of the video frame.

0:00 0:43

Record your response

0:00



Lets Practice...


Now maybe pick a strength if I can find one....

Watch

Learn

Practice

Work in progress
Version 01



0:06 0:49

▶

Record your response


0:00

🎤

Carl about

Jeanette about

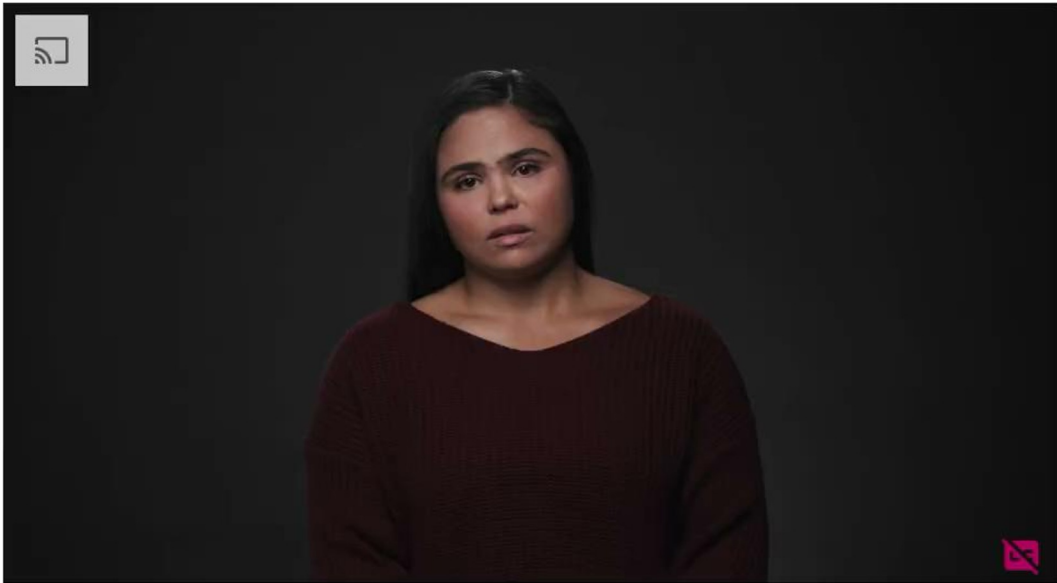
Miguel about



LYSSN

Practice #3: Asking an open-ended question

WatchLearnPractice




A video player interface showing a woman with dark hair wearing a dark red sweater, speaking against a black background. The video is at the 0:00 mark of a 0:43 duration. A play button is visible in the center of the video frame.

0:00 0:43

Record your response

0:00

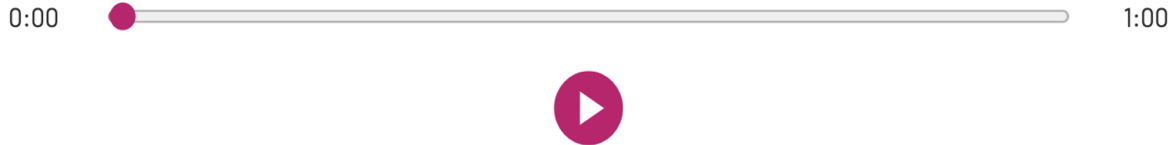


Skill Module 1: Psychoeducation and Normalization

In this module, we'll cover the basics of providing recovery-oriented psychoeducation to clients with psychosis. After working through the module content, you'll have a chance to practice providing psychoeducation with each of your four CBTpro clients.




Rosie [about](#)



1st Try

Watch Learn Practice



0:03 1:00


Record your response

0:00



2nd Try

Watch Learn Practice



0:03 1:00

Record your response

0:00



38% of trainees have logged in

to-date

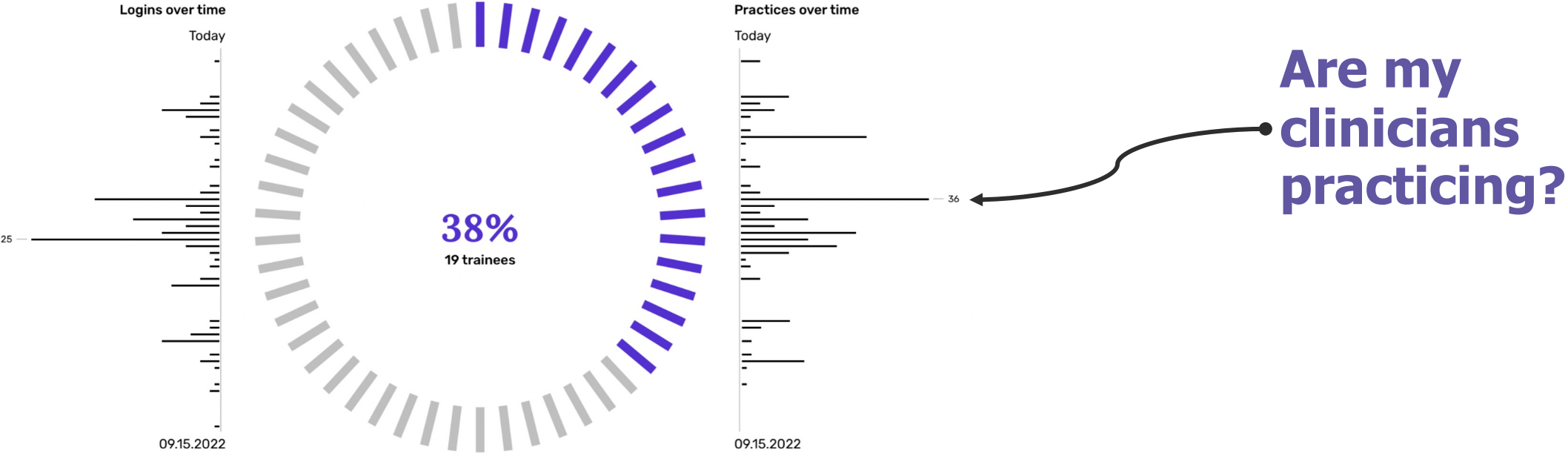
1 week

1 month

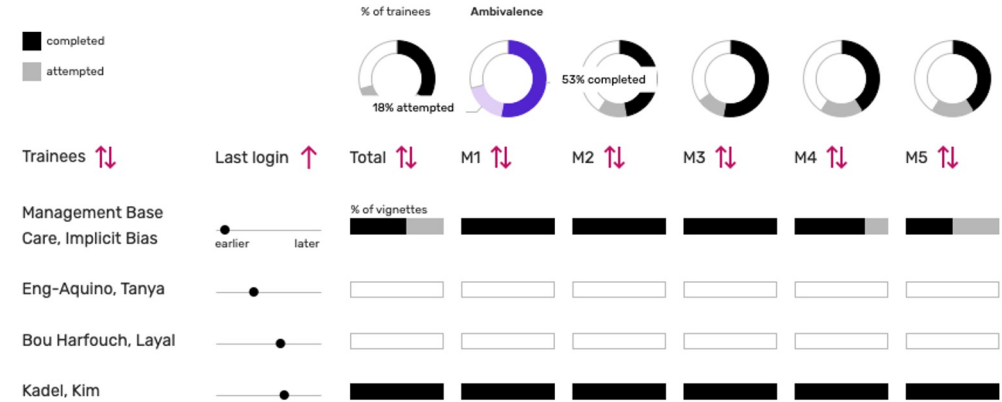
6 months

1 year

download data



67% of those completed a module



How are they doing?



Thank you so much!

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