The West Coast Trauma Project

mistakes to avoid
7 Mistakes Trauma Therapists Make

Therapists make mistakes. Unfortunately. Or fortunately, depending on your view. And whether you call them clinical errors, mis-steps, or learning opportunities, it happens to each of us and it’s part of the learning process. If you’ve been listening to the podcast, you know that some of the master therapists I’ve been talking to say that it’s inevitable, and that they’ve even made the same mistake on several occasions.

Below, a sampling of some mistakes some of the masters have made when they were starting out (with hyperlinks to the corresponding episode).

1. Getting lured in or blinded by the allure of the story your client is sharing with you.  
   Robert Weiss, LCSW

2. Not valuing as much as you should the important details of your client’s life story.  
   Bruce Perry, MD, PhD

3. Being too prideful, arrogant, and feeling as if you know better than anyone else; even your clients.  
   Peter M. Bernstein, PhD

4. Being too confined by the structure and boundaries of the 45-minute session to appreciate the value and importance of nurturing the relationship with you client.  
   Ron Gellis, Ph.D.

5. Putting so much value on the treatment you give a client that you forget to follow-up.  
   Edward Tick, Ph.D.

6. Pressuring clients (in this case, kids) to focus on developing insight before they know how and are able to self-regulate.  
   Cathy Malchiodi, PhD

7. Not being aware of the fact that your liking or disliking the client will definitely influence the quality of treatment you provide.  
   Robert T. Muller, PhD