

Quick Reference:
Transference & Countertransference

1. Spotting Transference (Client towards You)

- Client reacts Strongly toward you in the beginning of your meeting
- Distrust or Over-trust (with no clear reason for either)
- Emotional reaction does not match the current situation

2. Spotting Countertransference (You towards Client)

- Strong emotional reaction that surprises you (over protectiveness, anger, frustration, not the same level for other clients)
- Avoid or over involving yourself with the client
- Feeling burned out by one client more than others
- Thinking about the client excessively outside of work (more than the norm)

3. How to respond to incidents of Transference and countertransference

- Pause & Name it: Think about it, is this transference or counter transference (do a self-check/talk with someone else)
- Fact Check: Separate the client's history from you own assumptions (can be difficult)
- Reset Boundaries: Remind client of your role – Attorney, advocate. Not a friend, Not savior or miracle. You are there because you are there to represent the client and advocate for their defense. Reaffirm the mission of a Public Defender
- Seek Supervision: Consider regular supervision with an experienced lawyer or mental health professional to help explore reaction, biases and unresolved conflicts
- Avoid fostering dependency: While building trust is crucial, avoid actions that could unintentionally reinforced the client's dependency or blur the lines between professional and personal relationships