

## Preface

Scant attention has been given to the termination process outside of psychoanalytic writings, especially as termination applies to child psychotherapy. This is surprising, since we believe that to dismiss or minimize the importance of endings is to devalue the process of therapy. It flies in the face of 80 years of psychotherapy research that has shown that the therapy relationship (not theory or technique) is a robust variable in predicting successful therapeutic outcomes. Because the therapeutic relationship is proven to be meaningful and one of the primary instruments of change, it stands to reason that ending therapy must also be expected to be of considerable import and meaning. Part of the lack of attention given to termination in the literature in recent decades might be explained by the popularity of briefer forms of therapy, particularly the cognitive-behavioral models. In addition, there has been a corresponding decline in psychoanalytic, psychodynamic, and depth approaches in general. Although this may account for some of the rationale that neglects a fuller exploration of the topic of termination, the proponents of the briefer therapies now acknowledge that the therapeutic relationship plays an important role in motivating clients to do the cognitive-behavioral work. Could it be that clinicians find it unsettling to negotiate termination issues?

Psychotherapy follows a structured path, with a beginning, middle, and end phase that parallels life itself. We are born, we grow,

and we eventually get old and die. Our whole life is made up of a series of hellos and good-byes, some quite emotional and painful. It is astonishing to think that in a literal or figurative sense we will have to say good-bye to everyone we know eventually and they to us. Our mortality is a constant heaviness on our hearts and minds and exposes the ultimate form of human vulnerability. No wonder it is hard to think about endings even in therapeutic relationships of relatively brief duration such as in child psychotherapy.

Yet even the briefer relationships in our lives may be defining and life-changing for each of us. Think about your own life: Was there a teacher, a coach, a clergy person, a best friend, a mentor who was in your life for a relatively brief time whose influence you carry within to this day? I (DAC) think of my high school football coach, the late Don Reece, whom I admired greatly; a college Spanish teacher, Mrs. Rodriguez, who loved her subject matter so much that we were captivated; and my deceased mom, dad, and brother, who live within me and guide me at every turn. Eliana recently wrote about the profound feelings of gratitude she experienced at the death of her high school teacher, Carol Ann Breyer, a woman she credited with inspiring her to be of service to others. We both document the many feelings we have experienced when we think about the children we've worked with and how they have inspired us and instilled in us hope to continue our work.

This book is about endings of therapy with children, some brief encounters, others lengthy. We speak about the many ways those endings were handled and sometimes mishandled and the impact that ensues. As we wrote the book, we developed great trust in each other and were able to expose our vulnerabilities, share personal information, and draw strength from each other. We hope that this will allow readers to be introspective on the myriad emotions elicited by the topic of endings. You will read about some of our successes and some of our failures. You will hear us struggle with many questions. You will hear what moves and excites us. In many ways, you will witness why we became therapists and why we remained therapists for most of our adult lives. In an authentic human encounter, between us, and now shared with our readers, it could not be otherwise.