



## About the Event

Contemporary cognitive behavioral therapies (CBTs), such as Barlow's Unified Protocol as well as third-wave therapies such as acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) have converged on the avoidance of emotion as a central source of pathological symptoms that maintains suffering across a variety of diagnoses. Exposure to and acceptance of emotional experience has therefore become central to these therapies. Likewise, psychodynamic theory has long held that warded off affects maintain unconscious conflicts that lead to symptoms and suffering. Psychodynamic therapy has been conceived of as a type of exposure therapy for such affects but has not always demonstrated a systematic approach to fostering such exposures. Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISTDP) is an evidence-based experiential dynamic therapy that offers a systematic approach to fostering exposures to avoided emotions including in patients with chronic and refractory psychopathology, who tend to be especially avoidant of their emotional experience. In this presentation, the theory and evidence for ISTDP will be reviewed. The techniques of ISTDP will be demonstrated through use of video from a recorded treatment of a real patient. The intensive techniques of ISTDP can add to the arsenal of exposure-based approaches and may be especially valuable with complex and chronic patients who are highly emotionally avoidant.



**NATHAN THOMA,  
PHD**

**ASSISTANT ATTENDING  
PSYCHOLOGIST- NYPH  
CLINICAL ASSISTANT  
PROFESSOR OF  
PSYCHOLOGY IN  
PSYCHIATRY-WCM**

## Speaker Biography:

Dr. Nathan Thoma is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College. He is a certified Cognitive Therapist and a certified Advanced Schema Therapist. He is a past president of the New York City Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Association. While he is primarily a clinical practitioner in private practice, he has maintained an active hand in scholarship and research, with a particular emphasis on experiential techniques and process-outcome research. He has co-authored numerous book chapters, review articles, and empirical papers in peer reviewed journals. He also has a particular interest in psychotherapy integration, which attempts to bring together the most important elements of disparate therapies to produce an approach that can maximize effectiveness. Along these lines he co-edited the book, along with Dean McKay, *Working with emotion in cognitive behavioral therapy: Techniques for clinical practice*. While coming from a cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) background, Dr. Thoma has spent the past 10 years exploring the possibilities of additional treatments that may either enhance CBT or complement it, by training in additional therapies, including emotion-focused therapy (EFT), accelerated experiential dynamic psychotherapy (AEDP), and intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy (ISTDP). Dr. Thoma has spent the last three years in particular training intensively in ISTDP.

## Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the basics of ISTDP theory.
2. List some empirical evidence for the effectiveness of ISTDP.
3. Demonstrate ISTDP in action through video demonstration to become aware of ISTDP techniques and their possibilities for producing important breakthroughs of avoided emotion.

## References:

1. Abbass, A. (2015). *Reaching through resistance: Advanced Psychotherapy Techniques*. Seven Leaves Press
2. Thoma, N. C., & Abbass, A. (2022). Intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy (ISTDP) offers unique procedures for acceptance of emotion and may contribute to the process-based therapy movement. *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science*, 25, 106-114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcbs.2022.07.003>
3. Town, J. M., Abbass, A., Stride, C., Nunes, A., Bernier, D., & Berrigan, P. (2020). Efficacy and cost-effectiveness of intensive short-term dynamic psychotherapy for treatment resistant depression: 18-Month follow-up of the Halifax depression trial. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 273, 194-202. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2020.04.035>



Thursday, March 26th, 2026  
10:30am - 11:30am



Virtual Lecture:

[https://www.eeds.com/sign\\_in.aspx?  
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Instructional Level: This event is appropriate for all audiences (introductory, intermediate and advanced).



Financial Disclosure: Dr. Thoma has no relevant financial relationship(s) with ineligible companies to disclose and DOES NOT INTEND to discuss off-label or investigational use of products or services.