Artificial Intelligence as the "Third in the Room": The SADAR Method for Therapists' Reflective Practice

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ABSTRACT

Background. In the emerging landscape of digital psychotherapy, artificial intelligence (AI) can support the therapist's mind—not the patient's relationship—by offering a brief reflective space between sessions.

Objective. The SADAR method positions AI as a symbolic *"third in the room"* dedicated to therapists, aiming to strengthen reflective practice, clarify clinical hypotheses, and reduce relational collusion.

Method. Developed through iterative clinical self-study (2019–2025), SADAR follows a concise three-step workflow: (1) *Observation*—a short post-session note with scene, affect, and a first hypothesis; (2) *Guided Dialogue with AI*—three counter-hypotheses, two risks if the preferred view is kept, and one observable next step (*3–2–1*); (3) *Clinical Re-entry*—the therapist integrates what is useful into supervision notes and next-session planning. De-identified material and consent/data-governance safeguards are mandatory.

Illustration. In a tense session read as "resistance," SADAR elicited alternative readings (e.g., grief, shame, role-induction); recognizing a shame cue informed a gentle rupture-repair plan. Conversely, when a couple requested "quick scripts," SADAR flagged role confusion and the therapist deferred to live supervision.

Conclusion. While not yet outcome-validated, SADAR offers an ethically governed, light-touch reflective device that fosters metacognition and safer decisions. It invites empirical study on how brief, structured reflection may improve clinical clarity.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence; reflective practice; supervision; "artificial third"; SADAR; digital psychotherapy; metacognition.