



# Black Hole Effect: What It Looks Like in Practice

The term 'black-hole effect' in e-therapy was first coined by American psychologist [John Suler](#) in 1997 in his blog entry entitled 'The Black Hole of Cyberspace'.

## Psychological Effects of Black Hole Effect

From a **practitioner's perspective**, a client who disappears, never to be seen or heard from again, can bring thoughts and questions such as:

- Did I offend the client in some way?
- Am I not competent in being a therapist?
- I wonder if they are okay?
- Could I have seen this coming and tried to put an intervention in?
- I have let this client down. (feelings of guilt)
- Feelings of loss (transference from past relationships, can make this feeling more intense)

A **client** may perceive the phenomenon as:

- I have been abandoned. (transference from past relationships, can make this feeling more intense)
- Why have I been left this way? (anger)
- What has just happened? (confusion)

- Why bother! (*Do you know how much courage it took for me to make this appointment?*)
- I wonder if my therapist is okay?
- Have I done something wrong? (*Is it me?*)

**Remember:** As a therapist you can reduce the potential of a client experiencing the 'black hole' effect by contracting to have a second form of contact should your primary technology fail.

For example, you may contract with the client to be contacted via phone should the video platform you use for therapy fail.

## Reference

Suler, J., 2020. *John Suler, Ph.D.*. [online] Users.rider.edu. Available at: <<http://users.rider.edu/~suler/psyber/suler.html>> [Accessed 21 September 2020].

Counselling Tutor. 2020. *The Black Hole Effect in Online Counselling • Counselling Tutor*. [online] Available at: <<https://counsellingtutor.com/black-hole-effect-in-online-counselling/>> [Accessed 21 September 2020].

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