



Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is a general term referring to therapeutic interaction or treatment contracted between a trained professional and a client, patient, family, couple, or group. The problems addressed are psychological in nature and can vary in terms of their causes, influences, triggers, and potential resolutions. Accurate assessment of these and other variables is dependent on the practitioner's capability and can change or evolve as the practitioner acquires greater experience, knowledge, and insight.

Definition

Earlier forms of psychotherapy likely came from philosophy rather than medicine. (Kurtz'1999).

Ancient Greek: *psyche* (meaning breath spirit or soul), *therapeia or therapeuein*, - to nurse or cure.

According to **Wolberg, (1977)**:

"Psychotherapy is the treatment, by psychological means, of problems of an emotional nature in which a trained person deliberately establishes a professional relationship with the patient with the objective of

- i) Removing, modifying, or retarding existing symptoms,
- ii) Mediating disturbed patterns of behavior, and
- iii) Promoting positive personality growth and development"

According to **Jeremy Holms, (1991)** "Psychotherapy is a form of treatment based on the systematic use of a relationship between therapist and patient – as opposed to pharmacological or social methods – to produce changes in cognition, feelings and behavior".

What is Psychotherapy?

Psychotherapy includes interactive processes between a person or group and a qualified mental health professional (psychiatrist, psychologist, clinical social worker, licensed counselor, or other trained practitioner). Its purpose is the exploration of thoughts, feelings and behavior for the purpose of problem solving or achieving higher levels of functioning.

Psychotherapy aims to increase the individual's sense of his/her own wellbeing. Psychotherapists employ a range of techniques based on experiential relationship building, dialogue, communication and behavior change that are designed to improve the mental health of a client or patient, or to improve group relationships (such as in a family).

Psychotherapy may also be performed by practitioners with different qualifications, including psychiatry, clinical psychology, counseling psychology, clinical or psychiatric social work, mental health counseling, marriage and family therapy, rehabilitation counseling, school counseling, hypnotherapy, play therapy, music therapy, art therapy, drama therapy, dance/movement therapy, occupational therapy, psychiatric nursing, psychoanalysis and those from other psychotherapies.

Treatment through Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy, commonly referred to as talk therapy, is a structured treatment aimed at addressing emotional and psychological difficulties. At the onset of therapy, clients and therapists collaboratively identify specific changes the client wishes to make in their life, emphasizing a goal-oriented approach. This collaborative effort empowers clients to actively participate in their healing process, allowing for personalized treatment plans that focus on unique needs and desired outcomes. Goals can range from managing symptoms of anxiety or depression to improving relationships or enhancing self-esteem.

The therapeutic process involves in-depth discussions where clients explore their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Therapists facilitate these conversations, leading to insights about the client's experiences and underlying issues. In addition, therapists introduce various techniques and coping strategies to help clients navigate challenging aspects of their lives, including cognitive-behavioral techniques, mindfulness exercises, and problem-solving skills. Clients are often educated about their specific psychological disorders, which helps explain their experiences and empowers them to manage their symptoms more effectively.

For psychotherapy to be effective, the individual must enter treatment with a strong desire for change. Motivation plays a crucial role; when clients are committed to the process, they are more likely to experience significant improvements. An open mind is also essential in therapy, as clients may be encouraged to try new strategies or adopt perspectives that challenge their current beliefs. This willingness to experiment can lead to personal growth and transformation. Additionally, psychotherapy often involves challenging and reframing existing beliefs about oneself and the world through cognitive restructuring, which encourages clients to recognize unhelpful thought patterns and replace them with healthier, more constructive ones.

A key component of effective psychotherapy is the establishment of a safe, non-judgmental space where clients feel comfortable expressing themselves. This supportive environment fosters trust and allows for deeper exploration of sensitive topics. The success of psychotherapy is influenced by various factors, including individual commitment to the therapeutic process. Clients who are dedicated—through regular attendance, engagement in sessions, and application of techniques outside therapy—tend to experience more substantial benefits. The relationship between the therapist and client, known as the therapeutic alliance, is also critical. A strong therapeutic alliance, characterized by trust, empathy, and respect, enhances the effectiveness of treatment.

Clients should approach psychotherapy with realistic expectations about the process, understanding that change often takes time and that progress may not always be linear. In summary, psychotherapy is a valuable tool for personal growth and emotional well-being. By fostering a collaborative and supportive environment, clients can work with therapists to identify and achieve their goals. With motivation, openness to change and a willingness to challenge existing beliefs, individuals can significantly improve their mental health and quality of life.

Mental Health and Psychotherapy

- **Use of Psychotherapy in Treatment:**

Psychotherapy is frequently employed as a treatment for mental illnesses. It can be used on its own or in conjunction with medications, allowing for a comprehensive approach to mental health care.

- **Definition and Variety of Techniques:**

While often referred to simply as "therapy," psychotherapy encompasses a wide range of treatment techniques. These techniques can vary significantly, allowing therapists to tailor their approach to the individual needs of each client.

- **Role of the Therapist:**

During psychotherapy sessions, individuals with mental health concerns engage in discussions with a licensed and trained mental health care professional. This professional's role is to help clients identify and work through the underlying factors that may be triggering their mental health issues.

- **Focus on Understanding Triggers:**

Through open dialogue, therapists assist clients in recognizing the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors contributing to their mental illness. This process can help individuals gain insights into their challenges and develop strategies to cope with them more effectively.

Why do people consider using psychotherapy?

1. **Partnership with a Professional:**

Psychotherapy is a collaborative relationship between an individual and a licensed and trained mental health professional, such as a psychologist. This partnership is designed to help individuals understand their feelings and change behaviors that may be negatively impacting their lives.

2. Feelings of Sadness and Helplessness:

Many individuals seek therapy when they experience an overwhelming and prolonged sense of sadness, despair, or helplessness. This emotional state often leads to a pervasive lack of hope in their lives, prompting the need for professional support.

3. Functional Impairment:

Emotional difficulties can significantly hinder a person's ability to function in daily life. For example, individuals may find it challenging to concentrate on assignments or responsibilities, resulting in decreased job performance and overall productivity.

4. Harmful Behaviors:

Some people may recognize that their actions are harmful to themselves or others. This can include engaging in excessive alcohol consumption, exhibiting aggressive behavior, or other risky behaviors that negatively impact their relationships and well-being.

5. Concern for Loved Ones:

Individuals may also seek psychotherapy due to emotional challenges related to family members or close friends. Concerns about the well-being of loved ones can weigh heavily on a person's mind, prompting them to seek help in managing their own emotional responses to these difficulties.

Characteristics common for all psychotherapies

1. Rationale or Conceptual Structure:

All psychotherapies are founded on a rationale or conceptual framework that guides the understanding of the patient's problems. This theoretical basis helps therapists make sense of the client's experiences and informs the treatment approach.

2. Use of Specific Procedures:

Each type of psychotherapy employs specific procedures and techniques that are directly linked to the underlying rationale. These procedures are designed to address the identified problems and facilitate change in the client's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

3. Structured Relationship:

Psychotherapy involves a structured relationship between the therapist and the client. This relationship is often characterized by clear boundaries and roles, allowing for a safe and supportive environment where clients can explore their issues.

4. Expectation of Improvement:

A common expectation across all psychotherapies is that clients will experience improvement in their mental health and well-being. This expectation drives the therapeutic process, motivating both the therapist and the client to work towards positive change.

Who seeks therapy?

1. Children:

Children often seek therapy for various issues, including behavioral problems, difficulties in school, and family-related challenges. Therapy can help them develop coping strategies and improve their emotional and social skills.

2. Adolescents:

Adolescents may seek therapy for similar issues as children, such as behavioral and family problems, but they also face unique challenges related to separation from parents and peer relationships. Therapy provides a space for them to navigate these developmental transitions.

3. Young Adults:

Young adults may present with a broader range of concerns, including the same issues faced by children and adolescents, along with additional challenges related to career choices, identity formation, and life transitions. Therapy can assist them in making important decisions and adapting to new roles in their personal and professional lives.

4. Mature Adults:

Mature adults often seek therapy for a variety of reasons, including all of the previously mentioned issues. Additionally, they may face challenges related to changing relationships, family dynamics, health concerns, work-related stress, and shifts in social status. Therapy can provide support during these significant life changes.

5. Older Adults:

Older adults may seek therapy for many of the same reasons as younger individuals, but their concerns often include specific issues related to aging, such as end-of-life considerations, grief, loss, and adjustments to retirement. Therapy can help older adults process these experiences and find meaning and purpose in their later years.

Nature of the Psychotherapy Relationship

- **Professional Nature of the Relationship:**

The relationship between a therapist and a client is strictly professional, existing solely to facilitate the client's healing and growth. This professional boundary ensures that the focus remains on the client's needs and therapeutic goals.

- **Confidentiality and Safety:**

The therapeutic relationship is distinct from other types of relationships in that clients can share personal thoughts and feelings without fear of their information being disclosed. This confidentiality allows individuals to express themselves freely without worrying about how it might impact their job, family, or personal relationships.

- **Limited Self-Disclosure by Therapists:**

Therapists typically reveal very little about themselves in sessions. This practice helps maintain the focus on the client and prevents any potential influence on how clients choose to present themselves. By minimizing self-disclosure, therapists create a space where clients can explore their issues without distractions or shifts in the therapeutic dynamic.

Nature of Psychotherapy Communication

- **Understanding Verbal Communication:**

Therapists are trained to deeply understand not just the words clients say, but also the nuances of how they express themselves. This includes paying attention to the specific language used, as well as what might be intentionally left unsaid.

- **Non-Verbal Cues:**

In addition to verbal communication, therapists closely observe body language and vocal tone. These non-verbal cues provide crucial context that enhances their understanding of the client's emotions and overall message.

- **Experience with Similar Conditions:**

Therapists often have experience treating individuals with similar conditions or challenges. This background enables them to recognize and comprehend the particular problems that clients may face, offering insights based on previous cases.

➤ **Familiarity with Symptoms and Daily Challenges:**

Therapists are knowledgeable about the symptoms associated with various psychiatric illnesses, as well as the everyday difficulties that arise from these conditions. This expertise allows them to empathize with clients and tailor their therapeutic approach accordingly.

➤ **Probing Questions:**

Therapists know which questions to ask to facilitate deeper exploration of issues. They may pose questions that clients have never considered, encouraging reflection and insight that can lead to meaningful progress in therapy.

What does psychotherapy treat?

Psychotherapy is used for treating many different problems. Some alone, and some in combination with drugs. The most common ones are listed below:

1. Depression
2. Anxiety
3. Post-traumatic stress disorder
4. Low self-esteem
5. Anxiety disorder, including phobias
6. Emotional crises
7. Marital problems
8. Family disputes
9. Obsessive-compulsive disorder
10. Personality disorders
11. Alcoholism
12. Addiction
13. Problems stemming from child abuse
14. Behavioral problems
15. Bipolar disorder (in combination with drugs)
16. Schizophrenia (in combination with drugs)

Approaches of Psychotherapy

1. Psychodynamic Therapy

Psychodynamic therapy is based on the assumption that a person is having emotional problems because of unresolved, generally unconscious conflicts, often stemming from childhood. The goal of this type of therapy is for the patient to understand and cope better with these feelings by talking about the experiences.

Psychodynamic therapy, also known as insight-oriented therapy, focuses on unconscious processes as they are manifested in a person's present behavior. The goals of psychodynamic therapy are a client's self-awareness and understanding of the influence of the past on present behavior. In its brief form, a psychodynamic approach enables the client to examine unresolved conflicts and symptoms that arise from past dysfunctional relationships and manifest themselves in the need and desire to abuse substances.

Several different approaches to brief psychodynamic psychotherapy have evolved from psychoanalytic theory and have been clinically applied to a wide range of psychological disorders. There is a body of research that generally supports the efficacy of these approaches.

Psychodynamic therapy is the oldest of the modern therapies. (Freud's psychoanalysis is a specific form and subset of psychodynamic therapy.) As such, it is based in a highly developed and multifaceted theory of human development and interaction. This chapter demonstrates how rich it is for adaptation and further evolution by contemporary therapists for specific purposes. The material presented in this chapter provides a quick glance at the usefulness and the complex nature of this type of therapy.

2. Interpersonal Therapy

Interpersonal therapy focuses on the behaviors and interactions a patient has with family and friends. The primary goal of this therapy is to improve communication skills and increase self-esteem during a short period of time.

Interpersonal therapy, or IPT, is a short-term, limited-focus treatment for depression. Studies have shown that IPT, which addresses interpersonal issues, may be at least as effective as short-term treatment with antidepressants. Originally developed to treat depression in adults, it has been shown to be effective in treating adolescent depression and is commonly recommended as a treatment for depression in children. Events surrounding interpersonal relationships do not cause depression. But depression occurs within an interpersonal context and affects relationships and the roles of people within those relationships. By addressing interpersonal issues, interpersonal therapy for depression puts emphasis on the way symptoms are related to a person's relationships, including family and peers.

The immediate goals of treatment are rapid symptom reduction and improved social adjustment. The long-term goal is to enable people with depression to make their own needed adjustments. When they can do that, they are better able to cope with and reduce depressive symptoms.

Types of Psychotherapy

1. Behavioral Therapy

Behavioral therapy is based on the theory that learnt behavior in response to past experiences can be unlearnt or reformulated, without focusing on the reasoning for the original behavior. Individuals with compulsive and obsessive disorders, fears, phobias and addictions may benefit from this type of therapy. The focus is on helping the client to achieve goals and modify extreme behavioral responses to stress, anxiety etc. It is based on the principles of learning, operant and respondent conditioning, and can also draw upon theories from acceptance and commitment therapy. Behavioral therapies are based on the theory of classical conditioning. The premise is that all behavior is learned; faulty learning (i.e. conditioning) is the cause of abnormal behavior. Therefore the individual has to learn the correct or acceptable behavior. An important feature of behavioral therapy is its focus on current problems and behavior, and on attempts to remove behavior the patient finds troublesome.

Examples of behavior therapy include:

- Systematic Desensitization
- Aversion Therapy
- Flooding

2. Cognitive Analytical Therapy

Anthony Ryle, a British GP who later became a psychotherapist, developed cognitive analytic therapy (CAT). CAT combines cognitive theories, psychotherapy and explorations between language and thinking, and the link between historical, cultural and social factors on how we function. It encourages clients to explore their own resources and develop the skills to change destructive patterns of behavior, and negative ways of thinking and acting. The therapy is short term.

CAT developed in the 1980's and 90's as a model integrating aspects of cognitive therapy and psychoanalysis. The first book on CAT was by Tony Ryle in 1990 and represented the culmination of some years of research and practice, developing the model and testing it out clinically (see Ryle, 1990). One of the driving aims of the early proponents of CAT was to develop a common language for psychotherapies to get away from the elitist jargon of existing models (Ryle & Kerr, 2002). Whether this has been achieved or whether CAT has merely created its own elitist jargon is for the reader to decide.

CAT is a very collaborative model, whereby the therapist and client together build a picture of the presenting problems, identify areas for change and work on solutions together. The therapeutic relationship is very explicitly used as a tool in the therapy, for example to show when real life problems are being enacted with the therapist and try out different ways of relating. CAT is a time limited therapy, usually of 16 or 20 sessions, which are contracted

from the outset, allowing the ending to always be in mind and be worked towards. Having the ending in mind can help focus the therapy on the target problems. There is a growing evidence base for the effectiveness of CAT as a time limited intervention. For these reasons CAT can be seen as a cost effective model of treatment for use within the NHS (Ryle & Kerr, 2002).

- It aims to help the client solve problems by finding and changing dysfunctional thinking, behavior, and emotions.
- It often develops skills for changing your beliefs, relating to others, and changing behaviors.
- The psychotherapist works with the client to identify and test beliefs, leading to the understanding of dysfunctional thinking.
- Cognitive therapy was initially created to fight depression, but now is used more widely.
- CAT concerned itself with the treatment of neurotic disorders; and it was in this context that the early theoretical and technical elements were established.

3. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) developed out of behavior modification, cognitive therapy, and rational emotive behavior therapy, and combines cognitive and behavioral techniques. CBT is psychotherapy based on cognitions, assumptions, beliefs and behaviors, which aim to influence negative emotions relating to inaccurate appraisal of events. Therapeutic techniques vary to accommodate individual clients or issues but commonly include: keeping a diary of significant events and associated feelings, thoughts and behaviors; questioning and testing cognitions, assumptions, evaluations and beliefs that might be unhelpful and unrealistic; gradually facing activities which may have been avoided; trying out new ways of behaving and reacting. Relaxation and distraction techniques are also commonly used.

The underlying concept behind CBT is that our thoughts and feelings play a fundamental role in our behavior. For example, a person who spends a lot of time thinking about plane crashes, runway accidents and other air disasters may find themselves avoiding air travel. The goal of cognitive behavior therapy is to teach patients that while they cannot control every aspect of the world around them, they can take control of how they interpret and deal with things in their environment.

People often experience thoughts or feelings that reinforce or compound faulty beliefs. Such beliefs can result in problematic behaviors that can affect numerous life areas, including family, romantic relationships, work and academics. For example, a person suffering from low self-esteem might experience negative thoughts about his or her own abilities or

appearance. As a result of these negative thinking patterns, the individual might start avoiding social situations or pass up opportunities for advancement at work or at school.

In order to combat these destructive thoughts and behaviors, a cognitive behavior therapist begins by helping the client to identify the problematic beliefs. This stage, known as functional analysis, is important for learning how thoughts, feelings and situations can contribute to maladaptive behaviors. The process can be difficult, especially for patients who struggle with introspection, but it can ultimately lead to self-discovery and insights that are an essential part of the treatment process.

4. Gestalt Therapy

Gestalt is a German word meaning the whole and the sum of all the parts, and the symbolic configuration or pattern of elements, which make up the whole. Gestalt therapy is a psychotherapeutic approach, devised by Fritz Perls in the 1940's. Gestalt therapy draws on the belief that people have a natural predilection towards health, but old patterns of behavior and fixed ideas can create blocks interrupting the natural cycle of wellness, therefore effecting communication with others. Gestalt therapy addresses what is happening in the moment, bringing into awareness an individual's representation of the self, his/her response and interaction with others. The skilled Gestalt therapist makes effective and efficient interventions to bring the client into awareness of not only what is happening and what is being said but also body language and repressed feelings. Gestalt techniques often include acting out scenarios and dream recall.

Gestalt therapy has at its core two key principals. The first maintains that experiencing the present moment in its entirety is at the heart of psychology, unlike techniques that give significance to the unknown or imagined. Second, each and every person is linked and connected to all things. Without acknowledging that we are in relationship with all things, we can never truly understand who we are. These two principals of present state and relational theory form the foundation of Gestalt therapy. By using a formation of ideas that outline the premise of life in a relational way, this therapy provides a unique and profound perspective on life as we experience it with its peaks and valleys. This technique provides insight into ways in which we can alleviate our current distress and also aspire to our maximum potential.

5. Group Psychotherapy

Group psychotherapy is a branch of psychotherapy intended to help people who would like to improve their ability to cope with life's difficulties and problems but in a group situation. In group therapy, one or more therapists, and work with a small group of clients together. Practitioners recognize positive therapeutic benefits that could not be gained from one-on-one therapies.

For example - interpersonal problems are addressed well within groups. Group therapy is not based on one single psychotherapeutic theory, but many and often revolves around

talking, and may also include other approaches such as psychodrama, movement work, body psychotherapy or constellations work.

Aim: The aim of group psychotherapy is to support the solving of emotional difficulties and encourage the personal development of the participants in the group. The combination of past experiences and experiences outside the therapeutic group, with the interactions between group members and the therapist's, becomes the material through which the therapy is conducted.

6. Psychoanalysis

Developed by Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis is a form of psychotherapy in which psychotherapists work with clients to understand psychological functioning and behavior.

It can be used to investigate the mind, theorize about human behavior, and treat psychological illnesses. It is a specific mind investigation technique that usually involves the client lying on a couch, unable to see the psychotherapist. Psychoanalysis works primarily to explore the unconscious mind through the interpretation of mistakes, dreams, and symbols.

1. The psychoanalytic framework stresses the importance of understanding:
2. That each individual is unique
3. That there are factors outside of a person's awareness (unconscious thoughts, feelings and experiences) which influence his or her thoughts and actions,
4. That the past shapes the present
5. Those human beings are always engaged in the process of development throughout their lives.

Essentially, psychoanalysis is about the story of human beings, what motivates, inspires and sometimes cripples them, but it looks at these phenomena and tells a story from a unique perspective – “what lies beneath” the surface.

7. Humanistic-Existential Psychotherapy

Humanistic psychotherapy emphasizes a holistic understanding of the individual, incorporating the mind, body, and spirit. This approach seeks to acknowledge and address all aspects of a person's experience, rather than focusing solely on symptoms or disorders.

This approach encompasses a broad range of therapeutic techniques and methods, allowing therapists to tailor their interventions to the unique needs of each client. This flexibility is essential for addressing the diverse experiences of individuals.

Humanistic psychotherapy recognizes and values the inherent self-healing capacities of clients. The belief is that individuals possess the inner resources needed to heal and grow, and therapy serves as a supportive environment to facilitate this process.

In humanistic psychotherapy, the therapist aims to establish an authentic and egalitarian relationship with the client. This involves creating a safe space where clients feel valued and understood, enabling open and honest communication.

The humanistic-existential approach encourages personal growth and self-actualization. It helps clients explore their values, goals, and aspirations, ultimately leading to greater self-awareness and fulfillment.

Alongside the humanistic perspective, existential psychotherapy examines fundamental questions about existence, meaning, and individual responsibility. This aspect encourages clients to confront life's uncertainties and find personal meaning in their experiences.

The key principles and characteristics of Humanistic-Existential Psychotherapy, illustrating its focus on the whole person and the therapeutic relationship.

Modes of Psychotherapy

1. Individual Therapy

Just like it sounds, individual therapy is one-to-one work between client and therapist. Individual therapy is probably the most common mode of therapy and is often used in combination with other approaches such as couples therapy or group therapy. Individuals come to therapy for a wide range of reasons including life changes, losses, psychological injury, or for a particular disorder such as anxiety or depression. Some people simply want the supportive environment of an unbiased third party, some people want help in pursuing meaningful life direction.

2. Couples Therapy

Couples therapy is most often used when two people have a need to address an incident or problem that has created stress in their relationship. It can also be used to improve satisfactory relationships by deepening mutual understanding. The focus usually addresses expectations, relationship patterns, communication dynamics, and issues related to problem-solving. Sometimes a couple's psychotherapist sees the partners individually, especially when it is important to address childhood issues that are impacting the relationship.

3. Family Therapy

Family therapy involves two or more members of a family (couples therapy is technically a subset of family therapy). Family therapy is best used when there is a need to address problems or issues that affect family functioning when one or more family members are affected. This approach to therapy focuses more on inter-relational issues than on an individual's internal concerns.

4. Group Therapy

Therapy groups can be organized around specific problems such as anxiety problems, sexual abuse, or eating disorders. They also can be organized according to the type of client, such as adolescents, men, women, couples or parents. Groups can help lessen members' sense of isolation, provide support around a particular issue, and/or enhance relationships. Group therapy can be effective as a primary therapy or as an adjunct to other types of therapy. It can also be a more economical mode of therapy than individual therapy.

Confidentiality in Psychotherapy

Confidentiality of information discussed in the course of therapy is of critical importance. It is one of the factors that create a psychologically safe environment within which a person can explore difficult aspects of their lives and their selves. If there were no assurance of confidentiality, most people would be reluctant to share as much about themselves and would likely derive much less benefit from therapy.

Benefits of psychotherapy

1. Self-Understanding and Clarity:

Psychotherapy can lead to a deeper understanding of oneself, including personal goals, values, and motivations. This enhanced self-awareness helps clients make more informed decisions in their lives and align their actions with their values.

2. Improving Relationship Skills:

Through therapy, individuals can develop essential skills for improving their relationships. This includes effective communication, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation, which contribute to healthier interactions with others.

3. Overcoming Specific Problems:

Psychotherapy is effective in helping clients overcome a variety of mental health challenges, such as eating disorders, depression, anxiety, and other emotional difficulties. Therapists provide support and strategies that enable clients to manage and reduce the symptoms associated with these issues.

4. Problem-Solving and Resolution:

One of the key benefits of therapy is obtaining solutions to the problems or concerns that prompted the client to seek help. This may involve addressing specific challenges, developing coping strategies, and finding pathways to a more fulfilling life.

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