

Psychological Treatment

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss factors related to psychological treatments. We'll focus on:

1. The Psychotherapy Profession

Therapy is generally considered to be the most recognized of the psychological professions; over half of psychologists are engaged in some form of psychotherapy.

Psychotherapy is any psychological technique that's used to facilitate positive changes in a person's personality, behavior, or adjustment.

In other words, it's the treatment of some psychological problem. The goal of psychotherapy is to improve the mental health of its patients.

As you've probably seen, there are different professions in psychotherapy; namely, there are psychologists and psychiatrists.

The difference between those two professions is that a psychiatrist is a medical professional, whereas a psychologist is engaged specifically in psychology. A psychiatrist can prescribe drugs, although some psychologists in different states are able to do that as well.



HINT

The main difference to remember is that psychiatrists are medical professionals. They have to go to medical school, whereas psychologists are engaged in counseling more specifically.



TERM TO KNOW

Therapy

Intervention designed to improve clients' state of mind through changing beliefs, understanding the etiology of their difficulties, finding new ways to act and react.

2. Forms of Psychotherapy

There are different levels of therapy within psychotherapy as well. There is clinical psychology, which tends to

refer to the treatment of severe mental disorders, whereas the treatment for more everyday problems, such as depression or anxiety occurring on a smaller level, might simply be referred to as counseling.

However, it's important to note, though, that all of these different levels fall under the umbrella category of psychotherapy.

When engaging in the process of psychotherapy, a psychologist or psychiatrist will generally start by having a patient take a series of tests. This series can involve written inventories, like a personality inventory that asks the patient to go through and check either yes or no, or how much or to what degree they feel a certain way.

Once these tests are done, the person engages in the actual psychotherapy. There are different schools of thought around this process, such as psychoanalytical psychotherapy, and humanist or cognitive behavioral therapy, which will be covered in some detail later on in future lessons.

Some therapists use a variety of exercises to help the person heal. In a transpersonal approach, the therapist helps explore non-ordinary states, like meditation, peak performance, or religious experiences as a way to help a person grow.

3. Aspects of the Therapeutic Alliance

The important thing to remember is that in all of these different forms of psychotherapy, the main way that people are treated is through conversation.

Patients speak with their therapists in a back-and-forth, question-and-answer format. Because conversation is at the heart of psychotherapy, it's important to establish a strong relationship between the therapist and the patient. In other words, the patient really has to trust their therapist in order to be able to discuss things with that person.

This is called a **therapeutic alliance**, or the relationship between a therapist and client in which they can work together to affect some positive change—regarding either mental process or behaviors—in the client. There are certain aspects of this therapeutic alliance that make it unique from other types of relationships that a person has.

- **Professionalism:** Firstly, this relationship is professional, meaning that it's the therapist's job to help the patients. Also, the therapist expects nothing other than payment in return from the patient; the patient can thus feel a bit more comfortable opening up to that person.
- **Suspension of Judgment:** The therapist suspends any kind of expectations or judgments that they may have about that person. This way, the person feels more open and apt to discuss things that might be a bit more sensitive. Carl Rogers notes that there must be an “Unconditional Positive Regard” - meaning there has to be something about the client that you like - in order to have a successful relationship.
- **Focus on Client:** The focus in the **therapeutic relationship** is supposed to be on the clients. Therapists often don't reveal any opinions or even much information about themselves. They generally ask questions and interpret either verbal or nonverbal responses, but will usually not add any additional information except when giving interpretations. This can be different depending on the theoretical perspective that a particular therapist is employing, but it's generally assumed that this is the case.



TERMS TO KNOW

Therapeutic Alliance

A caring and collaborative union of the therapist and the client to resolve the client's problem.

Therapeutic Relationship

Helping relationship aimed at resolving problems and improving the client's life.

4. Individual Therapy

Individual therapy is probably the most recognizable therapeutic context. This type of therapy is conducted in a one-on-one session between a client and a psychologist, psychiatrist, or other type of psychotherapist.

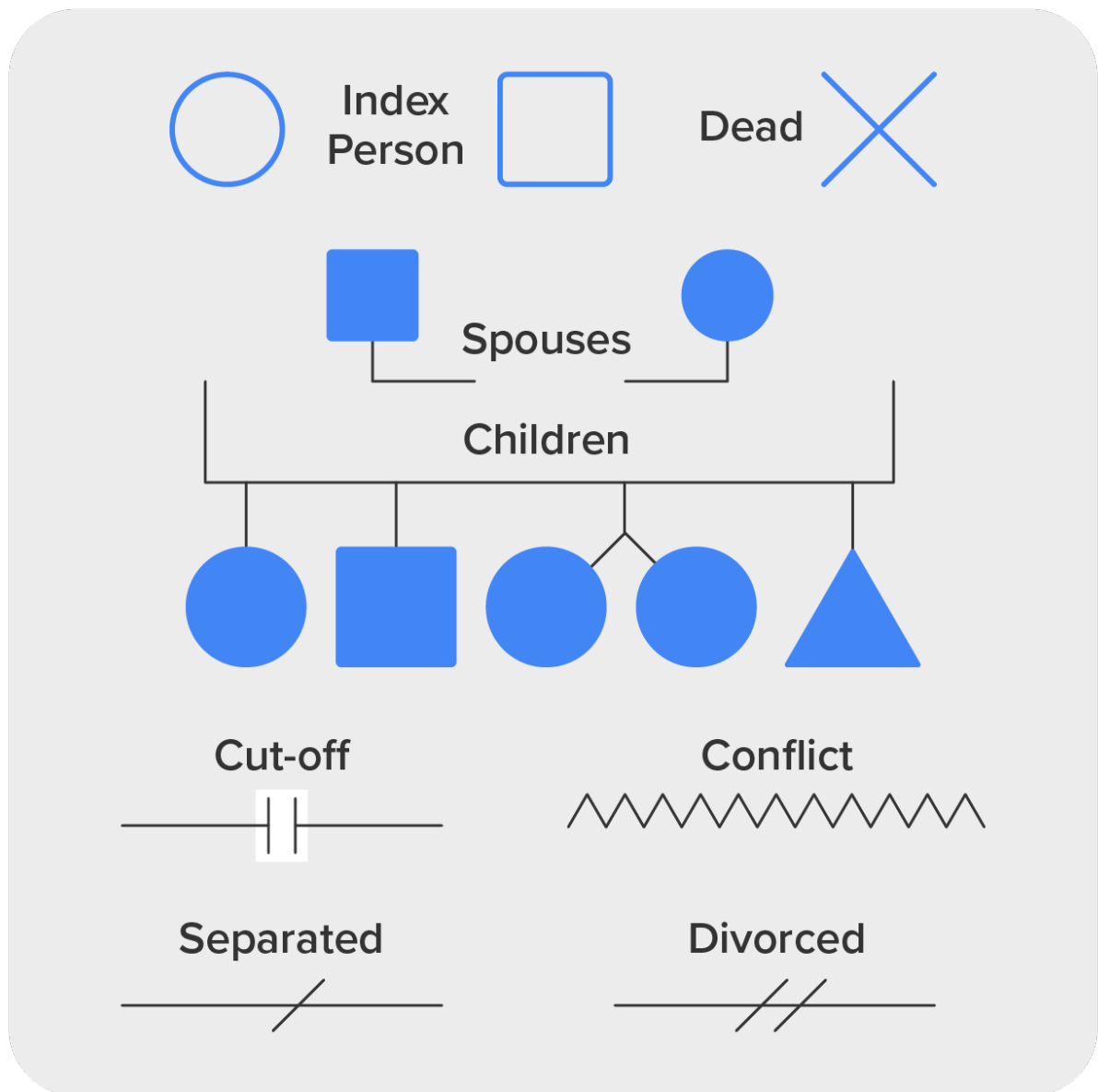
Individual therapy is one of the more widely used types of psychotherapy because it's a bit more private. People tend to feel more comfortable when they're talking to somebody one-on-one in a space where other people can't necessarily hear.

In an individual therapy setting, there are not only different theories used but different methods used as well. Some of these methods might seem a little bit more standard, such as a discussion or conversation between the professional and the client. However, there are other ways in which these two parties can interact.

➞ **EXAMPLE** They might use artistic therapy in which the client is asked to draw, sculpt, or show in some other visual way what they are feeling.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Role playing is also an option as a type of therapeutic intervention. The therapist and client act out different aspects of the problem.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Another technique is called a **genogram**, which uses symbols: circles represent women, squares represent men; and there are a variety of lines to show the relationships between people. These are arranged like a family tree and can help clarify relationships and patterns occurring between members of the family.



Because there are many different types of theories and methods that can be applied to individual therapy, it's important for each client to find a therapist that suits that client specifically. In other words, a client should choose a therapist that uses methods and theories that coincide with what the client believes and feels is best for him or herself.

TERM TO KNOW

Genogram

System of charting family dynamics and patterns

5. Group Therapy

The next type of therapeutic context is **group therapy**, in which there's more than one person involved in the therapy session.

Most of the theories that we've discussed in relation to individual therapy can also be adapted to a group setting.

Some people tend to gravitate towards group therapy sessions because there's a bit more social support. In this type of setting, others can offer advice or possibly share experiences that are similar to those of others in the group, making people feel less alone.

A lot of times, group therapy sessions focus on working with relationships. This can also involve role playing techniques, in which people interact in different roles, and then switch with each other in order to better understand the other side's reaction.



TERM TO KNOW

Group Therapy

Therapy for several clients; particularly effective for clients who work on personal relationships or similar skills.

5a. Family Therapy

One type of group therapy session that may be familiar to you is the type in which family is present, and all the family members participate in the session together.

The members can work individually, or they can meet with the therapist in a group, but the idea is to work on specific problems that the family might be having in terms of relationships and communication between the members.

The rationale behind **family therapy** is that what's a problem for one member of the family can be a problem for everybody. Thus, all the family members need to work as a unit in order to solve individual problems for the better of the whole.



TERM TO KNOW

Family Therapy

Therapy involving entire family—each has the opportunity to present their views. Family is viewed as a unit, not individuals.

5b. Couples Therapy

There is also a type of group therapy called couples therapy, which involves two people—a husband and wife, or two significant others—and the relationship between them.

Like family therapy, this therapeutic context is focused on improving the relationship and communication between the parties.

Couples therapy sessions can help to reshape any distorted perceptions that each member of the couple might have of the other. These sessions also allow the parties to interact directly with one another, as opposed to discussing their problems individually to reach a more indirect resolution.

6. Other Group Therapy Contexts

In addition to family and couples therapy, there are some other types of group therapy contexts to take a look at.

6a. Work/School Therapy

Work or school therapy is designed to help people in a particular setting or context.

One way this occurs is through sensitivity training, which is meant to help raise people's self-awareness and sensitivity towards others. The goal is generally to make people aware of their own prejudices, particularly in regards to certain groups of people.

➞ **EXAMPLE** A particular workplace may have sexual discrimination sensitivity training, which is designed to help people recognize, avoid, and deal with issues of sexual discrimination or harassment within the workplace.

6b. Support Groups

There are also group settings that are specialized or geared towards a particular problem or group of people that are having that problem.

These are called self-help or support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Gamblers Anonymous, which are designed to provide support and a social network for people dealing with a particular issue.

A lot of times in these groups, people can help each other by sharing relevant information in regards to whatever the issue they're dealing with might be.

➞ **EXAMPLE** In Alcoholics Anonymous, members might talk about current research in addiction or alcohol abuse. They can also relate personal experiences they might have had when dealing with their own issues. This type of discussion can be really helpful for people who need that kind of added support or guidance.

These support groups can be professionally led, meaning they are led by a mental health professional, like a psychologist or a psychiatrist, who might not have any personal experience with the issue that the constituents in the group are dealing with.

These groups can also be peer led, meaning they are only run by the people within the group who are dealing with the particular issue.

6c. Large Group Awareness Training

There are other types of group therapy that have produced a bit more dubious results but might still fit under the category of psychotherapy.

One of these is called large group awareness training, which involves a large group of people coming together, generally in a commercially designed program, with the goal of increasing self-awareness in order to facilitate personal change.

Instances of large group awareness training are the personal help or empowerment seminars that people attend in which they employ certain psychological techniques that are used in other types of therapy.

However, the actual psychological benefits of large group awareness training are a bit suspect, so it's important to take this particular group therapy context with a grain of salt when you're considering its efficacy as a form of psychotherapy.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that **psychotherapy**, as a **profession**, is a form of intervention in which the

therapist aims to better the client's life by affecting change in the client's mental processes or behavior. There are many **forms of psychotherapy**, but this goal is at the center of all of them.

You learned in addition to **individual therapy**, there are several other valid therapeutic contexts that can be used depending on the particular situation. One of these is **group therapy**, which typically involves clients working on relationships or similar skills. Two common forms of group therapy are **family therapy** and **couples therapy**.

Good luck!

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