



Types of therapies

Cognitive Behavioural Therapies

Behavioural Therapy

Behavioural Therapy is effective for individuals who would like some sort of behaviour change, such as addictions, phobias and anxiety disorders. Based on the principle that behaviour is learnt, and can therefore be unlearned, or reconditioned, Behavioural Therapy concentrates on the 'here and now' without focusing on the past to find a reason for the behaviour. The most famous examples of conditioning are those of Ivan Pavlov and B.F Skinner.

An experiment conducted by Pavlov demonstrated how ringing a bell close to dinner time caused dogs to associate the ringing of the bell with the expectation of food, which made them salivate even if no food appeared. The importance of this experiment is that the conditioned response (the dogs salivating) decreased in intensity the more times the conditioned stimulus (ringing of the bell) occurred without the appearance of food.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) combines cognitive and behavioural therapies, and involves changing the way you think (cognitive) and how you respond to these thoughts (behaviour). CBT focuses on the 'here and now' instead of focusing on the cause of the issue, and breaks overwhelming problems into smaller parts to make them easier to deal with. These smaller parts can be described as thoughts, emotions, physical feelings and actions. Each of these has the ability to affect the other, e.g. the way you think about things can affect how you feel emotionally and physically, and ultimately how you behave.

CBT is based on the principle that individuals learn unhelpful ways of thinking and behaving over a long period of time. However, identifying these thoughts and how they can be problematic to feelings and behaviours can enable individuals to challenge negative ways of thinking, leading to positive feelings and behavioural changes. The emphasis on cognitive or behaviour aspects of therapy can vary depending on the issue.

Cognitive Therapy

Cognitive Therapy involves learning how to identify and replace distorted thoughts and beliefs, ultimately changing the associated habitual behaviour towards them. It is usually focused on the present and is a problem-solving orientated treatment. Cognitive Therapy is based on the principle that the way we perceive situations influences how we feel about them.

When individuals are distressed they often can't recognise that their thoughts are distorted, so Cognitive Therapy helps them to identify these thoughts and reassess them. For example, if an individual makes a small mistake they may think "I'm useless, I can't do anything right". Strongly believing this may cause them to avoid the activity where they made a mistake and confirm this belief deeper. Addressing these thoughts, and reassessing them can lead to more flexible ways of thinking, allowing the individual to feel more positive, be less likely to avoid situations and be able to challenge their negative belief.

Cognitive Therapy was first developed in the 20th century by American psychiatrist Aaron Beck who realised what usually held his clients back most were negative thoughts and beliefs such as

"I'm stupid" or "I can't do that". Beck initially focused on depression and developed a 'list of errors' in thinking, that he believed could maintain depression. The list included errors such as magnification (of negatives), minimisation (of positives) and over-generalisation.

Albert Ellis, another therapist, came to similar conclusions about his clients' negative beliefs and their tendencies to 'catastrophise' or 'awfulise'. Ellis's work also became known as a form of Cognitive Therapy, now referred to as Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT).

Psychoanalytical and Psychodynamic Therapies

Psychoanalytic therapy

Psychoanalytic therapy is based upon psychoanalysis theory but is less intensive, with clients only attending between one and three sessions a week. Psychoanalytic therapy is often beneficial for individuals who want to understand more about themselves. It is particularly helpful for those who feel their difficulties have affected them for a long period of time and need relieving of mental and emotional distress.

Together, the therapist and the client try to understand the inner life of the client through deep exploration. Uncovering an individual's unconscious needs and thoughts may help them to understand how past experiences have affected them, and how they can work through these to live a more fulfilling life.

Psychodynamic therapy

Psychodynamic therapy evolved from psychoanalytic, however it tends to focus on more immediate problems, be more practically based and shorter term than psychoanalytic therapy. Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Otto Rank and Melanie Klein are all widely recognised for further developing the concept and application of psychodynamics.

Psychodynamic therapy focuses on unconscious thought processes which manifest themselves in a client's behaviour. The approach seeks to increase a client's self-awareness and understanding of how the past has influenced present thoughts and behaviours, by exploring their unconscious patterns.

Clients are encouraged to explore unresolved issues and conflicts, and to talk about important people and relationships in their life. Transference (when clients transfer feelings they have toward important people in their life onto the therapist) is encouraged during sessions. Compared to psychoanalytic therapy, psychodynamic therapy seeks to provide a quicker solution for more immediate problems.

Psychoanalysis Therapy

Freud is widely regarded as being the founder of modern psychology, developing the therapy known as psychoanalysis. This therapy is based on the idea that a great deal of an individual's behaviour and thoughts are not within their conscious control, that our childhood experiences have created our current behaviour patterns and thinking process. These thoughts and feelings can become repressed and may manifest themselves as depression or other negative symptoms. Psychoanalysis attempts to help clients develop insight into deep-rooted problems that are often thought to stem from childhood.

By talking freely about thoughts entering their mind, the client reveals unconscious thoughts and memories that the psychotherapist will seek to interpret and make sense of. Deeply buried memories and experiences are often expressed during this time and the opportunity to share these thoughts and feelings can help clients to work through these problems. These thoughts can be analysed through free associations (the client says whatever comes to mind during the

session, without censoring their thoughts), dreams and fantasies, which all allow the psychotherapist to clarify the client's unconscious thoughts. Clients are encouraged to "transfer" feelings they have toward important people in their life onto the therapist in a process called "transference". Success of psychoanalysis often depends on both psychotherapist and client and how they work together.

Psychoanalysis is an intensive process and usually clients attend four or five sessions a week for several years. The regular sessions provide a setting to explore these unconscious patterns, and try to make sense of them.

Humanistic Therapies

Humanistic therapy emerged in the 1950's, It focuses on recognising human capabilities in areas such as creativity, personal growth and choice. Two major theorists associated with this approach are Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. The main goals of humanistic psychology are to find out how individuals perceive themselves here and now and to recognise growth, self-direction and responsibilities. This method is optimistic and attempts to help individuals recognise their strengths by offering a non-judgemental, understanding experience, improving the way they feel about themselves.

Person Centred

Person Centred approach to counselling and psychotherapy sees human beings as having an innate tendency to develop towards their full potential. But this is inevitably blocked or distorted by our life experiences, in particular those who tell us we are only loved or valued if we behave in certain ways and not others, or have certain feelings and not others. As a result, because we have a deep need to feel valued, we tend to distort or deny our inner experiences that we believe will not be acceptable. A Person Centred therapist aims to provide an environment in which the client does not feel under threat or judgment. This enables the client to experience and accept more of who they are as a person, and reconnect with their own values and sense of self-worth. This reconnection with their inner resources enables them to find their own way to move forward. The therapist works to understand the client's experience from the client's point of view and to positively value the client as a person in all aspects of their humanity, while aiming to be open and genuine as another human being. These attitudes of the Person Centred therapist towards the client will only be helpful if the client experiences them as real within the relationship, and so the nature of the relationship that the therapist and client create between themselves is crucial for the success of therapy.

Transactional Analysis

Transactional Analysis is a theory related to communication and child development explaining the connections to our past and how this influences decisions we make. Transactional Analysis was developed during the late 1950's by psychiatrist Eric Berne.

Berne recognised three key "ego-states" - Parent, Adult and Child. The Parent ego state is a set of thoughts, feelings and behaviours we learnt from our parents and other important people. The Adult ego state relates to direct responses to the 'here and now' that are not influenced by our past. The Child ego state is a set of thoughts, feelings and behaviours learnt from our childhood. The ego-states are useful for analysing unconscious scripts and "games" people play.

Transactional Analysis seeks to identify what goes wrong in communication and provide opportunities for individuals to change repetitive patterns that limit their potential. It encourages individuals to analyse previous decisions they have made to understand the direction and patterns of their life for themselves. It also helps clients to trust their decisions and think/act as an individual improving the way they feel about themselves.

Gestalt Therapy

Gestalt Therapy focuses on the whole of an individual's experience; their thoughts, feelings and actions, and concentrates on the 'here and now' - what is happening from one moment to the next. Roughly translated from German, Gestalt means 'whole' and was developed in the 1940's by Fritz Perls. The main goal of this approach is for the individual to become more self-aware, taking into account their mind, body and soul. A therapist will constantly promote the client's awareness of themselves and often uses experiments that are created by the therapist and client. These experiments can be anything from creating patterns with objects and writing to role-playing. Promoting self-awareness is the main objective of gestalt therapy but other areas such as improving the ability to support one's emotional feelings are also important.

Transpersonal psychology

Transpersonal psychology literally means "beyond the personal" and involves encouraging the individual to discover the deep core of who they really are (the real person that transcends an individual's body, age, gender, physical space, culture, appearance etc.) It involves building and expanding on an individual's qualities, their spirituality and self development.

Abraham Maslow's research on self-actualisation was a key factor in the development of Transpersonal psychology, which has since been refined by the work of many others. Transpersonal Psychology encompasses three major areas: Beyond-Ego Psychology, Integrative/Holistic Psychology, and Transformative Psychology.

Psychosynthesis

Psychosynthesis was developed by psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli and involves an integration of the psychological and transpersonal elements. Psychosynthesis accepts the idea of a higher, spiritual level of consciousness, sometimes referred to as the "higher self". Techniques such as meditation and visualisation are often used for self-exploration and personal growth. Psychosynthesis studies a person as a personality and a soul.