

PSYCHOTHERAPIES

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Psychotherapy can help people overcome emotional problems, relationship problems, anxiety, habits like smoking, eating disorders, depression and obsessional thinking, work-related problems and much more.

There are a lot of different types of psychotherapy available. To shed some light on the choices, here are descriptions of several of the older established therapies that usually encompass a code of ethics. Professional associations also generally offer training programs on such therapies. The more recent innovative therapies may not yet involve such a structure. But this does not mean that they are not valuable therapies.

BEHAVIOURAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

This focuses on helping a person to understand how changes in behaviour can lead to changes in how he is feeling. Step by step with a set of different techniques the person learns how to increase chances for affirmative experiences when taking part in positive or socially reinforced activities.

COGNITIVE THERAPY

This assumes that much of what one thinks influences an individual's feelings. By correcting inaccurate or even false beliefs about themselves, their situation and the world around them, the patients' perception of events and their emotional state will improve. Cognitive therapy can take into account of what happened in the past, but mainly focuses on the present and future.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY (CBT)

This is a combination of the two previous techniques. Its structure aims at changing patterns of thinking and behaviour that are behind a person's problems. By pointing out alternative ways of looking at a situation, the person's view of life will change and ultimately this will improve the way the person feels.

Several CBT treatment programs for particular disorders have been successfully evaluated for efficacy. CBT is goal oriented and fairly brief (6-25 sessions). CBT is effective for the treatment of a variety of problems, such as alcohol problems, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, mood disorders, personality disorders, substance abuse, etc.

GESTALT THERAPY

This emphasizes on personal responsibility. It is an existential form of psychotherapy that focuses upon the individual's experience in the present moment. The therapist-client relationship and the environmental and social contexts of a person's life are important tools that are used to observe the self-regulating adjustments that people adhere to as a result of their

overall situation. The goal for the individual is to become aware of what he is doing, how he is doing it and how he can change himself, and simultaneously learn to accept and value himself. In Gestalt Therapy the therapist and client are seen as equals.

PSYCHODYNAMIC (PSYCHOANALYTIC) PSYCHOTHERAPY

This is an insight-oriented therapy that focuses on unconscious processes visible in a person's current behaviour. The goal is to bring the person to self-awareness and to understand the influence of his past on this immediate behaviour. The main attention is given to the events of the first 6 years of his life. Psychodynamic psychotherapy is a long term approach that requires usually two years or more of sessions, since it takes time to change one's personality or to integrate important developmental learning that was not met in previous years.

A short-term version also exists that can focus on one main major subject that is agreed on by the therapist and client.

FAMILY AND MARITAL THERAPY

This systemic psychotherapy approach understands individuals in the context of the surroundings that influence their development, and works with people who are in a relationship. Problems can run in a marriage, relationship or family. Family and marital therapies involve everybody concerned. The therapist sheds light on the relationships involved and on past relationships and events that might influence the person's current emotional state. Communication patterns that are malfunctioning within the family or relationship system are identified and amended. The participants learn how to listen, how to ask questions and they learn how to respond in a non-defensive way.

COUNSELLING

This is usually short term and aims to help you clarify your topmost problems. It is primarily used to help someone cope with recent disturbing events and difficulties. The aim is not to help you change as a person. This is the task of the other approaches mentioned above.

CONCLUSION

Each of the above mentioned therapeutic techniques has its unique features, its practical aspects, and its shortcomings. Choosing one technique over the other is not a matter of effectiveness, it is rather a question of the individual's current difficulty and his personality. The aim of a person who seeks support is to overcome his problems and this will work best if the individual chooses a therapeutic style that he feels comfortable with. ❄