

Theories of Counselling – Behavioural, Cognitive Behavioural Approach & Systemic Approach

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Learning Objectives

- Awareness of theoretical approaches used in counselling children and adolescents
- Awareness of the philosophy and basic assumptions governing approaches
- Knowledge of therapeutic goals and intervention strategies

Behavioural Approaches

Philosophy and Basic Assumptions

- Behaviour is the product of learning.
- No unified approach exist but rather a diversity of views and strategies.
- A variety of conceptualizations, research methods and treatment procedures are used to explain and change behaviour.

Key Concepts

- Behaviour approaches emphasize current behaviour, precise treatment goals and strategies, and objective evaluation of therapeutic outcomes.
- Concepts and procedures are explicitly stated and tested empirically.
- Specific behaviours are measured before and after intervention to determine the reason for behaviour change.

Therapeutic Goals

- Elimination of maladaptive behaviour and learning more effective behaviour patterns
- Identification of therapeutic goals at the outset of therapy – hallmark of therapy
- Increase personal choice and create new conditions for learning through goal setting

Techniques and Procedures

- Treatment interventions are tailored to specific problems.
- Many techniques are used to produce behaviour change.
- Techniques include, relaxation techniques, flooding, Eye Movement Desensitisation & Reprocessing (EMDR), assertion training, multimodality therapy, self-management programmes.

Applications

- Therapy has wide applicability for a range of emotional and behavioural problems.
- Problem areas include phobic disorders, depression, substance abuse, anxiety disorders, eating disorders.
- Successfully used with children and adolescents.

Cognitive Behavioural Approach

Philosophy and Basic Assumptions

- Reorganization of one's self-statements will result in corresponding reorganization of one's behaviour.
- Internal dialogue of clients plays a major role in their behaviour.
- How individuals monitor and instruct themselves and interpret events, helps us to understand the dynamics of disorders.

Key Concepts

- Psychological problems stem from processes such as faulty thinking, incorrect inferences and failing to distinguish between fantasy and reality.
- Cognitive therapy work to change dysfunctional emotions and behaviours, by changing inaccurate and irrational thinking.

Therapeutic Goals

- CBT aims to change the way clients think by using their automatic thoughts to reach the core schemata - bringing about schemata restructuring.
- Clients are encouraged to gather and weight the evidence of their beliefs.
- Clients learn to discriminate between their own thoughts and reality.

Techniques and Procedures

- CBT includes confronting irrational beliefs, cognitive homework, changing one's language and the use of humour.
- Socratic dialogue is emphasised to help clients discover their misconceptions for themselves.

Applications

- Most common application – treatment of anxiety and depression.
- CBT has been used successfully with treating a broad range of problems and clinical disorders in children, adolescents and adults.

Systemic Approach

- Systemic thinking conceptualize that the thinking and identity of individuals could change as the family dynamics change.
- Family therapy is grounded in systems theory - was developed due to the limitations of individual therapy.

Basic Assumptions

- Systemic approaches look at circular influence rather than linear influence.
- Circular causality: Looks at the way conflict occurs in the context of others who are causing reciprocal problems.
- Rules of Relationships: Families or systems have explicit or subtle rules to guide behaviour.

Rules of Relationships

- History: Do family legends or myths exist? Were these inherited from previous generations?
- Power structure & hierarchy: Who has the power? Who is in control?
- Roles: Who is the troublemaker, rescuer, or distracter?
- Boundaries: Are boundaries ridged or loose?
- Coalitions: Who is aligned with whom?
- Communication: What communication patterns are used?
- Metaphors: What is the underlying symbolic interactions between family members?

Family Therapy

- Family systems therapy models are grounded on assumptions.
- A client's behavior may serve a purpose for the family.
- Behaviour may be a function of the family's inability to operate productively especially during developmental transitions.
- Dysfunction patterns handed down from generations influence behaviour.

Approaches

- Adlerian
- Multigenerational
- Human validation process (HVP) model
- Experiential
- Structural
- Strategic

Concepts

- Adlerian – focus on relationship based on mutual respect, investigation of birth order and mistaken goals, and re-education.
- Multigenerational – focus on extended family patterns – key ideas include differentiation of self and triangulation.
- HVP model - focus on interpersonal relationship between family members and therapists. Utilises communication process to assist the family to move from chaos to new possibilities.

Concepts

- Experiential – takes a developmental perspective in explaining individual growth in a systemic context.
- Structural - emphasises family as a system, subsystems, boundaries and hierarchies.
- Strategic – intervention is based on a communications model. Change occurs through action-oriented directives and paradoxical interventions.

Therapeutic Goals

- Adlerian - seeks to unlock mistaken goals and interactional patterns in the family. Effective parenting is promoted.
- HVP model – Generating self-esteem and hope, identifying and strengthening coping skills, and facilitating movement toward health and actualisation.
- Multigenerational approach – Aim to decrease anxiety and bring about relief from distressing symptoms with the achievement of maximum self-differentiation for each family member.

Therapeutic Goals

- Experiential – Increasing awareness of one's present experiencing, facilitating growth and more effective interaction patterns, and promoting authenticity.
- Structural - aims to treat symptoms and change dysfunctional transactional patterns within the family. Rules are identified to govern interactions among family members which helps to develop clear boundaries and appropriate hierarchy.
- Strategic – central goal is to resolve the family's presenting problems by changing its current behavioral sequences.

Techniques and Procedures

- Family therapists are generally open to using techniques drawn from various approaches.
- The effectiveness of techniques used will be influenced by the therapist's personal characteristics, e.g. respect for clients, empathy, sensitivity and compassion.
- Flexibility in selecting interventions, will be required to meet clinical demands.

Resources

- Corey, G. (2005). Theory and practice of counselling & psychotherapy 7th ed, Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole
- Walker, S. (2012). Effective social work with children, young people and families: Putting systems theory into practice. Chapter 1. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
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