

Psy 202: Chapter 15 Treating psychological disorders

How are psychological disorders treated?

- No instant cures for psychological disorders, managed over time through treatment
- The choice of treatment depends on the type and severity of symptoms as well as the diagnosis
- Two categories of techniques to treat mental disorders, biological and psychological
- Psychotherapy: the generic name given to formal psychological treatment
 - All forms of psychotherapy involve interactions between a practitioner and a patient
- Biological therapies: reflect medical approaches and treatment to illness and to disease
 - Based on the notion that mental disorders result from abnormalities in the neural and bodily processes
 - Biological treatments range from drugs to electrical stimulation of brain regions to surgical intervention
- Psychopharmacology: the use of medication that affect brain or body functions, can be particularly effective for some disorders, at least short term
- One limitation of biological therapies is that the long-term success may require the person to continue treatment
- Nonbiological treatments are more effective for some disorders in the long run
- Also, focus on combining biological therapies with other approaches to find the best treatment
- The best treatment for autism is based on behavioral, not biological principals
- When a patient loses their parents, the therapist might favor drugs to cure the depression for the short term basis because this biological treatment was not caused by biological factors

Psychotherapy is based on psychological principles:

- Generally aimed at changing patterns of thought or of behavior
- More than 400 approaches to treatment
- Eclectic: using a variety of techniques that seem appropriate for a given client
- Good factor of therapy: maintaining a good relationship between the therapist and the client because a good relationship can foster an expectation of receiving help

Psychodynamic therapy focuses on insight:

- Sigmund Freud: first to develop psychological treatments for mental disorders
 - Believed that such disorders were caused by prior experiences, particularly early traumatic experiences
 - Josef Breuer: pioneered the method of psychoanalysis
- Early forms of psychoanalysis: client would lie on the couch and the therapist would be out of view. This method was meant to reduce the client's inhibitions and allow freer access to unconscious thought processes
- Involved uncovering unconscious feelings and drives that gave rise to maladaptive thoughts and behaviors
- Free association: client would say whatever came to mind and the therapist would look for signs of unconscious conflict
- Dream analysis: the therapist would interpret the hidden meaning of the client's dreams
- Goal of psychoanalysis is to increase the client's awareness of his or her own unconscious psychological processes and see how they would effect daily function (insight definition)
- By gaining insight, the client is freed from these unconscious influences
- Client's symptoms diminish as a result of reducing unconscious conflicts
- Psychodynamic therapy: adaptations to Freud's ideas... in this approach, a therapist aims to help a patient examine the patient's needs, defenses and motives as a way of understanding why the patient is distressed
- Feature of psychodynamic therapy is exploring the client's avoidance of distressing thoughts, looking for reoccurring themes and patterns in thoughts and feelings, discussing early trauma, focusing on interpersonal relationships, childhood attachment and exploring fantasies, dreams and wishes

- Some features, such as focusing on interpersonal relationships and patterns in thoughts and feelings are common to most forms of psychotherapy and thus they do not distinguish psychodynamic therapy from other types of treatment
- Psychodynamic therapy has become increasingly controversial (expensive and time-consuming)
- Weak evidence for its effectiveness in treating more psychological disorders
- Minimal empirical evidence for much of Freudian theorizing and it is not surprising that treatments based on those theories are largely ineffective
- New approach: consists of offering fewer sessions and focusing more on current relationships than on early-childhood experiences
- Believed that ppl have underlying conflicts that need to be resolved (same as Freud)
- This short term psychodynamic therapy can be useful for treating certain disorders, including depression, eating disorders and substance abuse
- It is not clear whether the psychodynamic aspects are superior to other brief forms of therapy, such as simply talking about personal problems
- The opportunity to talk about one's problems to someone who will listen plays a role in all therapeutic relationships

Health benefits of talking and expressing emotion:

- Researchers have found positive health effects for ppl who disclose emotional events
- When ppl reveal intimate and highly emotional material, they go into a trance-like state
 - Pitch of voice does down, rates of speech speed up, lose track of time and place
- Reveal that talking or writing about emotionally charged events reduces blood pressure, muscle tension and skin conduction during the disclosure and immediately after
- Over the long term, writing about emotional events improves immune functioning, even with ppl who have HIV
- Talking about emotions may help intercept the event in less threatening ways
- Such reinterpretation is a central component of many cognitive therapies

Humanistic therapies focus on the whole person:

- The goal of humanistic therapy is to treat the person as a whole, not as a collection of behaviors or a repository of repressed thoughts
- Client centered therapy: encourages ppl to fulfill their individual potentials for personal growth through greater self understanding
- Also to create a safe and comforting environment for clients to access their true feelings
- Motivational interviewing: a client centered approach over a very short period of time (1 or 2 interviews)
- Motivational interviewing has proved a valuable treatment for drug and alcohol abuse

Cognitive and behavioral therapies target thoughts and behavior:

- Many of the most successful therapies involve trying to change ppl's cognition and behavior directly
- Insight based therapies consider maladaptive behavior the result of an underlying problem, behavioral and cognitive therapies treat the thoughts and behaviors as the problem
- Behavior therapy: behavior is learned and therefore can be unlearned through the use of classical and operant conditioning
- Behavior modification is based on operant conditioning (method for helping ppl to learn desired behaviors and unlearned unwanted behaviors)
- Desired behaviors are rewarded and unwanted behaviors are ignored or punished
- Social skills training: elicit desired behavior
- Modeling: when the therapist acts out an appropriate behavior
- This successful use of newly acquired social skills is itself rewarding and encourages the continued use of those social skills
- Cognitive therapy: based on the theory that distorted thoughts can produce maladaptive behaviors and emotions
- Cognitive restructuring: a therapist helps the client recognize maladaptive thought patterns and replace them with ways of viewing the world that are more in tune with reality

- Rational Emotive therapy: the therapist acts as a teacher, explaining the clients errors in thinking and demonstrating more adaptive ways to think and behave
- In cognitive therapy and rational emotive therapy, maladaptive behavior is assumed to resume from individual belief systems and ways of thinking rather than from objective conditioning
- In contrast, interpersonal therapy: focuses on circumstances, namely, relationships the clients attempt to avoid
- Integrates cognitive therapy with psychodynamic insight therapy
- Interpersonal therapy developed out of psychodynamic ideas on how ppl relate to one another but it uses cognitive techniques that help ppl gain more accurate insight into their social relationships
- Treatment focuses on helping clients explore their interpersonal experiences and express their emotions
- To help prevent relapse of psychological disorders, developed mindfulness based cognitive therapy... ppl who recover from depression continue to be vulnerable to faulty thinking when they experience negative moods (prone to thinking negative things/moods)
- Based off the idea that medication helps mindfulness
- Has two goals: to help clients become more aware of their negative thoughts and feelings at times when they are vulnerable and to help them learn to disengage from ruminative thinking through meditation
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) incorporates techniques from cognitive therapy and behavioral therapy (correct the client's faulty cognitions and to train the client to engage in new behaviors)
- CBT is the most widely used version of psychotherapy (most effective form for therapy for psychological disorders like anxiety disorders and mood disorders)
- CBT for many psychological disorders include an exposure component... the client is exposed to repeatedly to the anxiety-producing stimulus or situation
- When someone avoids either stimuli or situations out of fear, the person experiences reductions in anxiety that reinforce the avoidance behavior
- If someone decides to avoid the stimuli, the avoidance response is eventually diminished (exposure and response prevention) this form of treatment is highly effective for OCD
- Systematic desensitization: therapist exposes the client to increasingly anxiety producing situations by having the client imagine them and then teaching the client to relax at the same time

Group therapy builds social support:

- Group therapy became popular after WW2 because more ppl needed therapy than therapists were available... also, group therapy is less expensive and provides an opportunity for members to improve their social skills and learn from one another's experiences
- Most beneficial group size is 8 ppl
- Groups vary in type of problems (substance abuse) and type of client (teens)
- Groups can be highly structured: usually behavioral cognitive therapy that have specific goals and techniques designed to modify the thought and behavior pattern of group members (effective for bulimia or OCD)
- Groups can be loose structured: focus on increasing insight and providing social support. The social support that group members can provide each other is one of the most beneficial aspects of this type of therapy

Family therapy focuses on the family context:

- Systems approach: an individual is part of a larger context and any changes in individual behavior will affect the whole system
- Over the course of therapy, the way the individual thinks, behaves and interacts with others may change. Such changes can affect the family's dynamics
- Family attitudes are often critical to long-term prognoses
- Some therapists insist that family members be involved in therapy when practical, except when including them is impossible or would be counter productive
- Evidence that helping families provide appropriate social support leads to better therapy outcomes and reduces relapses for individuals in treatment
- The key is the type of family involvement