

Understanding Psychotherapy And Its Effectiveness

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Talking has enormous therapeutic benefits. It strengthens your ties with others and having someone listen to you, promotes the feeling that others care and are interested in what you have to say.

You mull and worry about many things, often without conscious awareness of its pattern and purpose. When these worries are left unattended they can take a pathological form and contribute to difficulties. When you verbalise and hear your thoughts then you experience a sense of relief from quiet suffering. It is after the catharsis, that the process of self-awareness and change takes root.

Understanding Psychotherapy

You benefit from talking to friends and family, but sometimes it isn't enough, as they may not be attentive, offer advice before listening and offer untimely advice and assurance. Therefore, it is sometimes easier to talk to someone (a trained professional) who has no prior knowledge or expectation from you and to whom you can disclose your deepest fears and emotions without the worry of being judged.

However, something holds us back from seeking psychotherapy (also known as talk therapy). It is perhaps



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the misconception that you have to be 'little mad or harbour some strange and odd ideas' to see a therapist.

This is a myth that psychotherapy is only for mental illness and associated disturbances. However, isn't it entirely normal and human to be confused and nervous and become overwhelmed by work stress, career angst and relationship challenges? In fact, those who seek early help and therapy to

unravel their inner-self are more mature than those who wait until life's issues trigger breakdown and illnesses.

What Is Psychotherapy?

Psychotherapy is a psychological method used to address and treat emotional and mental health problems and its impact on life, family and relationships. It's also for self-improvement and to do what one does, better.

Psychotherapy is not a therapy that is 'done to you' by someone else, but is 'done by you.' You play an active part with the therapist as a facilitator and the process is empowering.

The process involves talking to a professional, either on a one-to-one basis or in groups, to get a deeper understanding of thoughts, feeling, worries and troublesome behaviour, with a view to raise awareness and bring about changes from a less adaptive to more adaptive state, as deemed desirable by the participant or client.

Psychotherapy is much more than just listening and guiding and change. It's about building trust and rekindling hope that life is fluid (and ever changing) and that problems are an opportunity for transformation and psychological growth rather than a hindrance.



Types Of Therapy

◆ Directive Or Non-Directive Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy can be directive or non-directive. In directive therapies like cognitive behavioural therapy or CBT, one can learn to identify and change unhelpful negative and pessimistic patterns of thinking, take note of and build on positive events, or apply relaxation techniques. Equally, develop skill sets to address social anxiety, low self-esteem and damaging anger problems. Here, the emphasis is on the present rather than past.

In non-directive therapies like psychoanalysis or psychodynamic psychotherapy, emphasises on exploring the past, including early family and other important relationships and how it may impact the present, reactions, behaviour and relationships.

◆ Systemic Therapy

Then there is systemic therapy, which looks at the relationships between individuals as part of a unit and how systems and interpersonal dynamics work together. Examples of this approach include group and family therapy.

Guiding Principles Of Psychotherapy

- ◆ Involvement in psychotherapy should provide confidential physical and emotional space where conversation can flow and deep recesses of the mind can be accessed more readily. It's about enabling the participant to describe difficult issues and exploring a deeper meaning that he/she is unaware of.
- ◆ It takes a holistic approach and sees the person as a whole, rather than from a narrow perspective of reported problems. The body, mind and conscious (and unconscious) thought, feelings and emotional reactions, interconnectedness to their world, are all taken into consideration.
- ◆ Each person has a unique personality, perspective and preferences. And a good therapist removes himself/herself (biases and opinion) from the therapy sessions and speaks from the client's point of view.
- ◆ The sessions enhance participation by reflecting and paraphrasing. Reflecting is a method where an attempt is made to reconstruct the client's thinking and associated feeling and conveying that back in an understandable manner, whereas paraphrasing is simply repeating parts of the story to let the client know that he/she is being heard.
- ◆ Continually assess readiness for change and/or resistance in form of uncooperativeness or sabotaging progress by erratic attendance; the therapist must be attentive to these factors and provide timely guidance.
- ◆ A therapist's manner is ideally curious, honest and deeply interested in exploring human behaviour and feelings with an unconditional positive regard and also a belief that everyone has an inherent ability to heal themselves plus are capable of recovery from difficulties, provided they are treated with respect, compassion and warmth.
- ◆ We all need to look inward at some point in life, in order to make more coherent sense of the world outside. And when there is conflict, collaborative approach with a therapist can be a great advantage.