Which Type of Therapy Is Best for You?

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Types of Therapy for Depression and Their Benefits

You've made a hard decision: you need therapy. Although it may seem like a failure to admit this to yourself, it is one of the best choices you can make.

Every day mental health issues are left untreated, which only leads to issues more complex and intense in the future. You are succeeding in taking steps towards improving your life.

The work does not end with the conclusion that you need therapy, though. Therapy actually covers a huge range of mental health treatment options that vary wildly from each other primarily based on the theoretical orientation of the therapist.

This orientation is based on the education, principles, and values each therapist draws from during sessions. It will dictate how the therapist will conduct a session, the expectation of the client, and the pertinent subject matter.

Behavioral Therapy

As the name might suggest, behavioral therapy is interested in the current behaviors you find problematic and works to modify them. The focus will be to increase the wanted behaviors and lessen or extinguish unwanted behaviors through a series of rewards and punishments.

Contingency management (CM) is one specific type of behavioral therapy that aims to produce more desirable behaviors. Often, the therapist will provide reinforcement for behaviors related to therapy goals.

If the goal is to quit smoking, the therapist will reward abstinence. If the goal is to pay attention for longer periods of time, the therapist will reinforce related behaviors, eventually teaching you how to reward yourself.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

This brand of therapy extends the scope of behavioral therapy to include and emphasize the importance of thought. CBT is centered on the concept that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are linked in a bidirectional way so each aspect influences and is influenced by the others.

If you have a feeling you do not want, a therapist using CBT would focus on changing your thoughts and behaviors to accomplish your goal of an improved mood.

CBT has received much attention for its ability to effectively treat many mental health disorders. Not only that, but CBT has been helpful in improving outcomes related to physical health conditions like asthma, type 2 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and many others.

In CBT, the therapist will work as a teacher by providing helpful information regarding the nature of your symptoms while providing encouragement and reinforcement for changes along the way.

CBT is an umbrella term with many other types of therapy under it, like:

- **Cognitive therapy** – a form that primarily focuses on the value of thoughts over behaviors.
- **Rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT)** – works to identify and understand the beliefs of the individual with the understanding that changing beliefs about self and the world will change their feelings.
- **Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT)** – grew from a need for specialized treatment for people with borderline personality disorder. Over the years, this version of CBT has been successfully applied to a wider variety of mental health issues.

Psychoanalytic/Psychodynamic

When people think about therapy, they may recall images of Sigmund Freud, inkblot tests, and people laying on couches talking about their mothers. These ideas are all related to psychoanalytic/psychodynamic therapy.

Psychoanalytic therapy is based on the idea that unconscious information is the source of dysfunction. By bringing the unconscious into consciousness when talking to a therapist, the problems will shrink as an understanding grows.

Psychoanalysis is a lengthy course of treatment, with clients attending multiple sessions weekly for many years. For that reason, psychoanalytic therapy has decreased in popularity. As a response, psychodynamic therapy was born from the same beliefs with a focus on short-term treatment.

Person-Centered Therapy

Person-centered therapy was developed at a time when psychoanalysis was very popular. While psychoanalytic therapy sees problems arising from unconscious motivations related to people's inborn need for power and control, person-centered therapy is based on the idea that people are innately good, and therapy is best used to uncover and foster this goodness.

The therapist will employ open-ended questions to allow the client to arrive at their own conclusions regarding the problems they face as well as possible solutions.

Motivational interviewing (MI) is a specific type of person-centered therapy with the goal of building increased motivation and drive for change from within the client. Through a sense of collaboration with the therapist, the client builds a sense of independence to control their own progress.

Individual Differences

Note that the list above is not a fully comprehensive overview of the different types of therapy available, but it does represent the orientations used primarily by the majority of therapists. Other types of therapy styles include:

- Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR)
- Family- and community-based
- Reality therapy
- Play therapy
- Expressive arts therapy, including dance therapy for depression

Another consideration for someone new to therapy to consider is the tremendous amount of individual differences between therapists. Two therapists who claim to use CBT could present and handle sessions in drastically different ways and focus on different information.

With this being true, it will be more valuable to focus on finding a therapist you feel comfortable speaking to on a

regular basis. Without a strong rapport, even the perfect therapeutic strategies will not improve your symptoms.

The list of available therapies for mental health symptoms is long and compounded by the individual differences of the therapist. When starting the process, consider the types of therapy you think would be the best fit your views, while remembering the expertise of your therapist and the therapeutic relationship will be the principle driving force for your success.