

1. Introduction to Counselling

Introduction

In the counselling field, the argument about whether counselling differs significantly from psychotherapy is largely academic. Some therapists from psychodynamic traditions suggest that only psychoanalysts are the true psychotherapists and not any other discipline. Others on the other hand use the term psychotherapy to mean longer-term work, even though some psychotherapists refer to their work as brief therapy, and counselling to refer to shorter term work, even though some counsellors may work with clients for years.

Sigmund Freud strongly supported the idea of lay analysts without medical training. He published two staunch defenses of lay analysis in 1926 and 1927, arguing that medicine and the practice of analysis were two different things. Ernest Jones brought psychoanalysis to the United Kingdom in 1913 along with Freud's preferences in this area. The tradition of lay therapists continues to this day in the United Kingdom, where most psychoanalysts, psychotherapists and counsellors come from a non-medical lay background.

In the United States, however, the American Medical Association insisted that analysts should be medically qualified. Even though there were already many lay analysts practicing in the United States, in 1926 the state of New York made lay analysis illegal, and shortly thereafter the American Medical Association warned its members not to cooperate with lay analysts. To this day, almost all the United States psychoanalysts are medically qualified, and counsellors typically study psychology as undergraduates before becoming counsellors.

The term counselling was originally used by American, Frank Parsons, the founder of vocational psychology in 1908. He was responsible for the basic principles of vocational guidance that developed into the profession of vocational counselling.

It was in response to the United States prejudice against lay therapists, that in the 1940's, psychologist, Carl Rogers took the term "counsellor" to distinguish lay therapists from those from the medically qualified psychodynamic traditions. Rogers himself was not originally permitted by the psychiatry profession to call

himself a psychotherapist. Ironically, Rogers became renowned as one of the most influential empirical scientists in the fields of both psychology and psychiatry.

Modern counselling and psychotherapy are now both considered to provide clients with a wide range of options for addressing many different kinds of psychological distress and issues.

Counselling and Psychotherapy

Today the two terms psychotherapy and counselling are more commonly used to describe the same process. Both terms relate to overcoming personal difficulties and working towards positive changes. Psychotherapy and counselling are professional activities that utilise an interpersonal relationship to enable people to develop self-understanding and to make changes in their lives. Counsellors and psychotherapists work within a clearly contracted, principled relationship that enables individuals to obtain assistance in exploring and resolving issues of an interpersonal, psychological, or personal nature.

Below are some distinguishing features of each model.

- Counselling is a helping approach that highlights the emotional and intellectual experience of a client, how a client is feeling, and what they think about the problem they have sought help for.
- Psychotherapy encourages a client to go back to their earlier experiences and explore how these experiences effect their current 'problem', therefore helping the client to become conscious of experiences which they were previously unaware of.
- Counsellors are less likely to be concerned with the past experiences of a client and use a more humanistic approach, using techniques from a client-centred based therapy.
- Psychology explores such concepts as perception, cognition, attention, emotion, phenomenology motivation, brain function, personality, behaviour, and interpersonal relationships.

- Counselling is more likely to be focused on specific problems, changes in life adjustments and fostering clients' wellbeing.
- Psychologists at times rely upon symbolic interpretation and other inductive techniques. Psychology incorporates research from the social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities.
- Counselling involves communication with a client to assist in finding a solution to a problem, or to foster the conditions to develop useful insights a client's behaviour, ways of thinking or life circumstances.
- Psychotherapy is more concerned with the restructuring of the personality or self and the development of insight. At advanced levels of training, counselling has a greater overlap with psychotherapy than at foundation levels.

An Overview of the Theories of Psychology

Although psychological therapies trace their history back to the contributions of the work of Sigmund Freud in Vienna in the 1880s, many modern approaches to counselling and psychotherapy are now much more firmly grounded in other bodies of thought. Many theorists and scientists have contributed to the evolution and advancement for improving mental health.

Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

Trained as a neurologist, Freud entered private practice in 1886. By 1896 he had developed a method of working with hysterical patients suffering from neuroses, a large group of non-psychotic disorders where there is high anxiety in the individual, which he termed "psychoanalysis". It was through the treatment of his patients that Freud formed the basis of his theories. For instance, he observed that many of his patients' current problems could be traced back to childhood and were usually linked to sex. He therefore stressed the importance of sexuality and childhood development. His own self-analysis enabled him to discover the significance of dreams as disguised or socially acceptable expressions of what he termed, the Oedipus complex, the triangular conflict of

love of the opposite-gender parent, and rivalry for this parent for the love with the parent of the same gender.

The concept of the unconscious was central to Freud's account of the mind. He believed that while poets and thinkers had long talked about the existence of the unconscious, he had ensured that it received scientific recognition in the field of psychology.

Perhaps the greatest of Freud's many contributions to psychology was his division of the mind into ego, id, and superego.

The Id (Latin "it") is made up of all the basic drives and urges that we have as humans. It contains our fundamental needs: e.g. thirst, hunger, sex, security. These are our instinctive drives. A very young child is driven by the Id. Each time we experience emotion; the Id has reached into consciousness and revealed itself. Each time we are "driven" to do something, the Id has conquered the other two aspects of the personality and drives us to carry out its desires.

The Ego (Latin "I") is our sense of self, the sense of who I am. As we grow and mature, we become conscious of ourselves as individuals. This growing individuation is evidence of the growth of the Ego. Each time we weigh out how to act, each time we reason about our lives our Ego is dominant and directing the activities we act out.

The Superego (Latin "super," a higher position) The Superego is our conscience. It is all those moral values that society places on us. As the Ego grows, we begin to internalise the "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts" of society and these are incorporated into the personality as the Superego. Each time we feel guilt or shame we are responding to the promptings of the Superego and accepting the morality and customs of our peers, parents and society.

Alfred Adler (1870-1937)

"It is easier to fight for one's principles than to live up to them." (Alfred Adler)

Adler examined personality around the same time as Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud. They worked on some theories together until Alfred Adler rejected Freud's notion that sexuality was the primary force controlling human behavior. Instead, Adler believed that personality difficulties are rooted in a feeling of inferiority deriving from restrictions on the individual's need for self-assertion.

According to Adler, children have a deep sense of inferiority due to their small size and throughout life people attempt to free themselves from inferiority by searching for power. He also maintained that people have social interests and feel responsible for actively improving life for everyone.

While studying personality, Adler developed the term, "inferiority complex". He described this as feelings of a lack of worth. He wrote:

We all wish to overcome difficulties. We all strive to reach a goal by the attainment of which we shall feel strong, superior, and complete"

He also described the term, "superiority complex". This complex developed when a person tried to conquer their inferiority complex by suppressing their existing feelings. He felt that people were constantly trying overcome their feelings of inferiority to reach superiority.

Adler believed that people are focused on maintaining control over their lives. He believed in single "drive" or motivating force behind our behavior, claiming that the desire we have to fulfill our potentials becomes closer and closer to our ideals. This theory was called "Individual Psychology" because Adler believed that each person was unique and no previous psychological theory could be applied to all people.

Carl Jung (1875-1961)

Jung was a close collaborator of Freud's from 1907-1913 who eventually split from Freud and pursued the development of his own school of analytical psychology, drawing heavily on both Freud's and Alfred Adler's ideas. Jung emphasised the importance of the ego much less than Freud and developed quite a different view of the unconscious.

His term, the "collective unconscious" represented all the collective wisdom of man's past, which could be drawn upon for the benefit of the individual. In addition there was the personal unconscious where any frightening or threatening thought could be repressed (not just sexual ones), forming complexes. In Jungian theory part of the collective unconscious was represented in the persona. This is the mask that people wear when they are acting according to the conventions of the social role that they have chosen for themselves. The primary structures of the collective unconscious that form the

foundation of the human psyche are the “archetypes”. Jung defined the archetype as a “primordial” psychic image or pattern, representative of our ancestral experiences, that recurs throughout human history in dreams, fantasies, myths, and art.

The major archetypal figures of the collective unconscious are the “shadow, anima, animus, and self”. The shadow is the amoral, pre-human, animal aspect of personality that is instinctively focused on reproduction and survival. The anima is the female aspect of personality present in the collective unconscious of men. The animus is the male aspect of personality present in the collective unconscious of women. The Self is the unified personality that integrates conflicting aspects of the personality such as the anima and animus. The unconscious is centred around the Self. The existence of the collective unconscious, as described by Jung, depends on the inheritance of acquired characteristics, a concept not supported by modern geneticists.

Jung also developed his own personality theory that introduced the concepts of extraversion and introversion. These explained human behavior as a combination of four psychic functions - thinking, feeling, intuition, and sensation. This psychological typology provided the theoretical foundation for the well-known Myers-Briggs personality survey.

Gradually, like Adler and Jung, many of Freud’s inner circle including Karl Abraham Wilhelm Reich, and Otto Rank, all began developing their own theories and approaches, which sometimes differed markedly from Freud’s. All these immediate descendants of Freud’s approach are characterised by a focus on the dynamics of the relationships between different parts of the psyche and the external world, termed “psychodynamics.”

Behaviourism

Another influential school of thought in psychology is behaviourism. Rejecting the notion of hidden aspects of the psyche which cannot be examined empirically, such as Freud’s rendition of the unconscious, therapists in the behavioural tradition began to focus on what could actually be observed in the outside world.

BF Skinner (1904-1990)

Skinner was highly dismissive of psychoanalysis and argued that Freud's reasoning is flawed; that it looks for complex explanations that aren't really relevant. The behaviourists, in attempting to understand an individual's behaviour, looked only at observable behaviour and refused to indulge in unverifiable assumptions about what is happening inside a person's head.

Skinner maintained that the only theories that are useful for understanding human behaviour are those describing the mechanisms by which things are learned. "Conditioning" is the term used to describe the way habits and behaviours are learned through reinforcement. Skinner distinguished between two basic types, classical and operant conditioning.

The content of his science was the principles of operant behaviour. In 1938, these included conditioning and extinction, primary and secondary reinforcement and punishment, response differentiation and induction, stimulus control and generalisation, and motivating operations. These principles remain fundamental in psychology today.

Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936)

Classical conditioning had its theoretical origins at the beginning of the century when Ivan Pavlov demonstrated it in dogs. He paired an "unconditioned stimulus", such as food, with a "conditioned stimulus", such as the ringing of a bell. This results in the generalisation of the unconditioned response, in this case salivation, to occur after the conditioned stimulus, even in the absence of the unconditioned stimulus. Thus, the conditioned stimulus elicits a conditioned response. To illustrate, Pavlov knew that a dog's normal response to the presentation of food is to salivate. By pairing food with a bell tone, the dog will soon salivate when the bell tone is sounded even without food being presented. In operant conditioning, the individual plays a more active role. It is similar to classical conditioning, but involves the individual performing some action and associating the action with some response.

The Phenomenological Humanistic Tradition

A further third force developed as a reaction against behaviourism. It was pioneered by American psychologist Carl Rogers, and Abraham Maslow, called the “phenomenological humanistic tradition in psychology”. The emphasis was based on the human's potential for goodness, growth and creativity and the importance of the conscious experience.

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970)

Maslow is well known for popularising the term “self-actualisation”. His work concentrated on motivation; he interpreted human motivation as a search for self-actualisation: the sense that one's abilities and talents are being fulfilled and that a person is becoming everything that they are capable of becoming.

Maslow developed a hierarchy of motives. He asserted that human needs are hierarchical, with the lower level needs needing to be satisfied before the higher ones can. On the lowest level are physiological needs, such as food and sleep. Above that are the safety and security needs which are especially important in children. Next is the need for love and belonging.



Maslow argued that human beings need acceptance and affection for security. This will enable the individual to reach out to others and form meaningful relationships. Above this is the need for self-esteem, to have others think highly

of the individual, and for the individual to think highly of him or herself. Self-actualisation is the highest human motive, according to Maslow. However, because the lower needs must be at least partially fulfilled before the higher motives can be engaged, only a very small proportion of the population ever reaches this highest level because most people either do not satisfy the lower needs or simply seek no greater fulfillment once the need for self-esteem has been satisfied.

Maslow believed that the psychoanalytic views of human motivation were inadequate, and that the focus on coping strategies as underlying human motivation ignored behaviours that seem to be engaged in for their own sakes, such as playing, appreciating art or studying. He addressed this by adding the need for knowledge to his hierarchical model at one of the higher levels. This model provides a good explanation of certain aspects of motivation, such as how different motives may compete with each other in the individual person.

Another of Maslow's significant contributions is the concept of self-actualisation forming the basis of a large field of modern performance psychology. It is a concept that has flooded the popular press in books on self-regulation and self-improvement.

Carl Rogers (1902-1987)

Rogers was a psychologist who had a profound impact on many aspects of psychology and counselling, especially in the 1960s. With views similar to that of Maslow and others, Rogers believed that self-actualisation is the primary goal of human beings. However, his approach can also be likened to that of Freud and the psychoanalysts, in the sense that he developed techniques for counselling and psychotherapy. There are also similarities between Rogers and Adler because they both emphasised the unity of the individual. The term holistic is often used to describe such an approach to the individual. Maslow too described himself as holistic in his approach.

Rogers believed that human beings are basically good by nature; that there is nothing inherently evil in humans. He also maintained that humans seek to grow and seek personal fulfillment through meaningful personal relationships with others. He stressed the importance of the individual's conscious experience, an approach that is sometimes labeled as "phenomenology".

Some important concepts in Rogerian theory are the “phenomenal field”, an individual's view of reality, and the self, that part of the phenomenological field that selects certain aspects of the external world and rejects others as determined by exposure to cultural values. Because the self is a part of the phenomenal field it too can be subjectively evaluated. According to Rogers there will be conflict where a person experiences a discrepancy between their subjective evaluations and those of people important in their development, such as parents. This may result in the denial of certain aspects of the self and lead to an unrealistic self-concept. The role of the therapist in the Rogerian tradition is to genuinely share the emotion of the client, helping her to accept thoughts that previously had been too threatening to the self to accept. The therapist helps the client to replace a rigidly fixed view of the self with a process of accepting the self.

Rogers described four main characteristics of the psychologically healthy person as someone who:

- is open to experiences
- trusts in the self
- has a view of the self that is unaffected by other's views
- and is willing to be a process rather than an unchangeable product.

Rogers also discussed the conditions necessary for effective psychotherapy:

- problems must be faced
- the therapist must be honest
- there must be unconditional positive regard for the client with no self-gratification on the part of the therapist
- and there should be an empathic understanding of the client

The main criticism of Rogers' psychoanalytic method has been that it is only really effective for people who are generally well adjusted already. Its strengths are its emphasis on the free will of the individual and its positive attitude towards human nature.

Counselling and Psychotherapy Today

Modern counselling and psychotherapy have benefited from the empirical tradition which was given such impetus by Carl Rogers, even though the research agendas of psychology and counselling have diverged greatly over the

last half century. Many counsellors and psychotherapists base their work on a client-centred orientation developed by Rogers. This orientation holds that clients have a natural tendency to be self-healing and it is the counsellor's or psychotherapists' role to be a good listener. Client-centred theorists contend that, by listening and reflecting in an understanding and respectful way to what the client says, they will ensure that the client will gain a better understanding about their concerns and issues.

Additional work in cognitive behavioural psychology, learning theory and behaviour has influenced many therapeutic approaches. These counsellors or psychotherapists look more to define the problem, to educate or train the client into developing new coping skills to obtain a positive outcome. Working within this model the counsellor is generally not interested in looking for an historical context.

The diversity of both empirical and theoretical work, coupled with the complexity of human beings, has led to a profusion of different approaches in the field of psychotherapy and counselling that number in the hundreds. While the main approaches continue to develop, and others appear and then fade away, clients are left to choose for themselves what might be best for them.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapies

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is considered to be a short-term, goal-oriented psychotherapy treatment that takes a hands-on, practical approach to problem-solving. Its goal is to change patterns of thinking or behaviour that are behind people's difficulties, and so change the way they feel. It is used to help treat a wide range of issues in a person's life, from sleeping difficulties, or relationship problems, to drug and alcohol abuse or anxiety and depression. CBT works by changing people's attitudes and their behaviour by focusing on the thoughts, images, beliefs and attitudes that are held, a person's cognitive processes, and how these processes relate to the way a person behaves, as a way of dealing with emotional problems.

An important advantage of cognitive behavioural therapy is that it tends to be short, taking five to ten months for most emotional problems. Clients may attend one session per week, each session lasting approximately fifty minutes.

During this time, the client and therapist work together to understand what the problems are and develop new strategies for tackling them.

Cognitive behavioural therapy may be considered as a combination of psychotherapy and behavioural therapy. Psychotherapy emphasises the importance of the personal meaning we place on things and how we develop thinking patterns. Behavioural therapy pays close attention to the relationship between our problems, our behaviour and our thoughts. Most psychotherapists who practice CBT personalise and customise the therapy to the specific needs and personality of each client.

Aaron Beck (born 1921)

Cognitive behavioural therapy was developed by an American psychiatrist, Aaron Beck, in the 1960s. Beck practiced psychoanalysis at the time and observed that his clients tended to have an internal dialogue going on in their minds, almost as if they were talking to themselves. By helping his clients identify and evaluate these thoughts, Beck found that they were able to think more realistically concerning their issues. This led clients to feel better emotionally and to modify their behaviours.

Beck proposed that different disorders were associated with different types of distorted thinking. Distorted thinking has a negative effect on a person's behaviour no matter what type of disorder they had. The therapeutic goal is to educate a person to understand and become aware of their distorted thinking, and then how to challenge its effects. He revealed that frequent negative automatic thoughts reveal a person's core beliefs, and that these core beliefs are formed over a lifelong experiences so that we *feel* these beliefs to be true.

Beck suggested that most of these thinking patterns are set up in childhood, and become automatic and relatively fixed. For example, a child who didn't receive much open affection from their parents but was praised for school work, might come to think, "I have to do well all the time. If I don't, people will reject me." Such a rule may do well for the person a lot of the time and help them to work hard. However, if they experience failure, then a negative automatic thought pattern may be triggered such as, "I've completely failed. No one will like me. I will never be any good."

After reading this unit, answer the following self-assessment questions.

Written Short-Answer Questions

1. Briefly compare and contrast the two fields psychotherapy and counselling. What do you see as the key differences
2. Describe the different levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.
3. In your own words, explain the theory behind Behaviourism.
4. Briefly describe Freud's division of the mind into ego, id, and superego.
5. Describe the practice of cognitive behavioural therapy. What is its basis?

Further reading

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