

What is Psychotherapy?

Psychotherapy comes from two Greek words, ψυχή (psyche) and θεραπεία (therapy), the first meaning soul (form) and the second meaning healing. Therapy can occur in various forms, for example, physiotherapy – therapy for physical pains such as ultrasound for a sprained ankle. Psychotherapy is somewhat peculiar in that you go and speak to someone about very personal matters, things you may not ever have spoken about before. The someone you speak to starts off, usually, as a stranger. In the process of speaking about your difficulties, sometimes emotional (like anxiety or depression), sometimes behavioural (like incessant overeating, viewing of pornography or mistreating your partner), or both, you have an opportunity to better know yourself. Often there are elements of your psyche that are a mystery to you: you find yourself saying things or doing things but don't know why. These instances are very good to bring to your session (the appointment) as they can be cues to a more fuller understanding of who you are and why you do the things you do, and feel the things you feel. The therapist will try to interpret your stories, experiences, feelings and dreams in the service of a deeper self-knowing.

For two other definitions that I like, see links to Storr's and Shelder's.

Resistance

It is, of course, not uncommon, that people are reluctant to face aspects of themselves that they know either nothing or very little about. Sometimes we know much about how we behave and feel, but are still reluctant to face our troubles. For example, we are habitually late which causes us and those around us distress, and yet we do nothing about it. Or, we know we have troubles getting along with those we love, and yet we always conveniently find a way to blame this on others. This reluctance we call 'resistance'. The therapist will work with the client to attempt to address it.

Honesty

In order to deal with resistance, the client will be invited to be honest with herself/himself and with the therapist. Being honest with ourselves can, at times, be terribly difficult. We find ways of hiding from the truth of who we are and what we do. We may feel ashamed or guilty or powerless over our actions and choices. The therapist will accompany you on this journey.

Talking Therapy

Psychotherapy is a talking therapy meaning that the road to a fuller appreciation and understanding of who you are and why you live life the way you do is primarily attained through dialogue. As the therapist gets to know you better, a relationship develops with a key element being trust. Assuming you find the therapist reliable, trust can be a powerful transformative ingredient in the therapy. Brilliant insight is sometimes helpful, but the client's belief that the therapist has her or his interests at heart really makes all the difference.

Theoretical Background/Approaches

There are many different theoretical backgrounds to psychotherapy: psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural, and person-centred to name three. My theory is primarily psychodynamic which means I see our psyche/minds as being influenced by forces that are not always in our full awareness and also that these forces push and pull within us (hence the word 'dynamic' which means movement) causing possible conflicts. I incorporate elements of interpersonal, inter-subjective and relational approaches to my psychodynamic background.