**Evaluating Psychotherapies**

The question is: Does psychotherapy work?

**The Patient**

Research shows that the majority of patients that undergo psychotherapy find it to be an effective form of treatment. Research also shows however that those patients in the control group (those patients receiving no form of psychotherapy) had at least equal rates of success in recovering from their disorder.

**Outcome Research**

A newer technique of analyzing data called meta-analysis has shown that psychotherapy works better than no therapy**. Meta-analysis** is a statistical procedure in which the results of many different studies can be combined to act as one large one. Other findings suggest that psychotherapy is most effective if the problem is specific and clear-cut.

**Comparing Therapies**

Findings of the Society of Clinical Psychology task force suggest theses therapies for the following problems:

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| --- | --- |
| ***Problem*** | ***Suggested Therapy*** |
| Depression | cognitive, interpersonal, and behavior therapy |
| Anxiety | cognitive, desensitization, stress reduction therapy |
| Bulimia | cognitive-behavior therapy |
| Bed-wetting | behavior modification |
| Phobias | behavioral conditioning (systematic desensitization) |

Although some therapies are better suited to a particular disorder, Mary Lee Smiths meta-analysis showed however that no one therapy is truly superior.

**Alternative Therapies**

Three alternate therapies are discussed in this lesson: Therapeutic touch; eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR); and Light Exposure therapy.

1. **Therapeutic touch**: A therapy in which "energy fields are manipulated" in an attempt to push them "into balance" and is carried out by the therapist moving her hands in the air around the patient. Researchers claim that the effect of these manipulations is the placebo effect where the patients confidence in and positive expectations make them feel better. Tentatively, there is no scientific research that confirms its effectiveness.
2. **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing**: Developed by Irene Shapiro in 1989, advocates of this therapy claim that initiating darting eye movements while thinking about traumatic events lessens the anxiety associated with the event. There is no research to support these claims and skeptics feel that merely providing a safe situation to work through these traumatic events coupled with the placebo effect yields a positive result.
3. **Light-Exposure Therapy**: This therapy is one in which the patient spends a certain amount of time each day in front of a light that emits intense light rays. People with seasonal affective disorder, a type of wintertime depression that many believe is a result of less daylight hours and less sun exposure, have used this type of therapy. Research has shown that this has been an effective treatment in that morning bright light does indeed reduce the symptoms of SAD in many sufferers.

**Important Elements of Psychotherapy**

Most psychologists agree that the three essential elements in the various psychotherapies are:

1. 1. Hope for demoralized people
   2. A new perspective
   3. An empathetic and trusting relationship with the therapist

**Types of Therapists**

It is important to understand the differences among the various types of therapists available to treat people with psychological disorders.

***Psychiatrist:***Trained medical doctors who often specialize in the treatment of the more serious psychological disorders. Some may not have extensive training in psychotherapy, but as an **M.D**., they are the ***only*** "therapists" allowed to ***prescribedrugs***.

***Clinical Psychologists:***Most are psychologists with a Ph.D. and expertise in research, assessment, and therapy, supplemented by a supervised internship. You can find clinical psychologists in agencies and institutions as well as private practice.

***Clinical or psychiatric Social workers*:**Most have completed aMaster of Social Work graduate program plus postgraduate work in the area and are able to offer psychotherapy, mostly to people with everyday personal and family problems.

***Counselors:***There are many types of counselors**.**School counselors**,**Marriage, pastoral and family counselors, counselors that work with substance abusers, those that have been sexually abused, etc. Each type has its own particular educational requirement.

**Preventing Psychological Disorders**

* A human being is an integrated **bio-psycho-social system**in that we areinevitably limited by our biological make-up and influenced bythe environment that in which we find ourselves.
* The Myers text suggests that " Prevention of psychological problems means empowering those who have learned an attitude of helplessness, changing environments that breed loneliness, renewing the disintegrating family, and bolstering parents and teachers skills at nurturing childrens self-esteem".
* It is also suggested "Everything aimed at improving the human condition, at making life more fulfilling and meaningful, may be considered part of primary prevention of mental and emotional disturbance".