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Unit – 1: Introduction, Psychoanalytic and Adlerian Therapy

What is Psychotherapy?

- Psychotherapy, or talk therapy, is a way to help people with a broad variety of mental illnesses and emotional difficulties. Psychotherapy can help eliminate or control troubling symptoms so a person can function better and can increase well-being and healing.
- Problems helped by psychotherapy include difficulties in coping with daily life; the impact of trauma, medical illness or loss, like the death of a loved one; and specific mental disorders, like depression or anxiety. There are several different types of psychotherapy and some types may work better with certain problems or issues. Psychotherapy may be used in combination with medication or other therapies.
- Depending on the approach used by the therapist, a wide range of techniques and strategies can be used. Almost all types of psychotherapy involve developing a therapeutic relationship, communicating and creating a dialogue, and working to overcome problematic thoughts or behaviors.

Characteristics of Psychotherapy:

All psychotherapeutic approaches have the following characteristics:

- (i) There is systematic application of principles underlying the different theories of therapy,
- (ii) Persons who have received practical training under expert supervision can practice psychotherapy, and not everybody. An untrained person may unintentionally cause more harm than any good,
- (iii) The therapeutic situation involves a therapist and a client who seeks and receives help for her/his emotional problems (this person is the focus of attention in the therapeutic process), and
- (iv) The interaction of these two persons — the therapist and the client — results in the consolidation/formation of the therapeutic relationship. This is a confidential,

interpersonal, and dynamic relationship. This human relationship is central to any sort of psychological therapy and is the vehicle for change.

All psychotherapies aim at a few or all of the following goals:

- (i) Reinforcing client's resolve for betterment.
- (ii) Lessening emotional pressure.
- (iii) Unfolding the potential for positive growth.
- (iv) Modifying habits.
- (v) Changing thinking patterns.
- (vi) Increasing self-awareness.
- (vii) Improving interpersonal relations and communication.
- (viii) Facilitating decision-making.
- (ix) Becoming aware of one's choices in life.
- (x) Relating to one's social environment in a more creative and self-aware manner.

Individual Therapy and Group Therapy:

Individual therapy occurs when one or more therapists work with a single individual in the same session, versus group therapy which is defined by treatment delivered by one or more therapists to one or more individuals in the same session.

Advantages of Group Therapy:

- Individuals begin to understand that they are not alone in their issues, and other people have similar issues and struggles. This results in the development of a sense of identity, belongingness, and the release of tension and stress.
- The therapeutic alliance refers to the bond between the therapist and the client that allows them to address the client's issues effectively. This is an extremely important factor in positive therapeutic outcomes. According to Dr. Yalom, the therapeutic alliance occurring in group therapy is broader than the alliance that occurs in individual therapy.
- Individuals in group therapy receive support from other people and are also able to give support to other members. Receiving and giving support develops a broader therapeutic alliance and a shared sense of goals that fosters improvement.
- Individuals in group therapy find that they often have fewer reservations about discussing their issues with others because they can identify with the members of the group.
- Individuals in groups develop insight into their own issues and greater self-awareness by listening to others who have similar problems.
- Being in a group fosters the development of communication abilities, social skills, and results in individuals being able to learn to accept criticism from others.
- Group therapy sessions are generally more affordable than individual therapy sessions.
- Individuals in groups often make lifelong connections with other members of the group.

Disadvantages of Group Therapy:

- The attention of the therapist is spread across the members of the group. This means that individuals will not receive focused treatment, and some individuals may take up disproportionate amounts of time with their own issues.
- People in group therapy sessions risk having other confidential issues spread by other group members outside the group. Although it is continually emphasized that what is discussed in the group needs to remain in the group, there is no guarantee that some individuals will adhere to this confidentiality.
- Even though the therapeutic alliance in the group therapy environment is broader, it is not as focused on any single individual.
- Because group therapy sessions must accommodate many individuals, there is less opportunity to fit the therapy sessions into one's personal schedule.
- Some individuals in groups may not be motivated to participate and will simply let the others in the group contribute.
- Whenever there are groups of people, there is the chance that certain subgroups will form within the larger group. If the therapist does not check this, the development of small alliances within the group can impede the group's progress.
- Certain individuals are not appropriate for group therapy. Often, individuals who are extremely manipulative, aggressive, shy, impulsive, or suffering from active psychosis are not appropriate for groups. In addition, some individuals are not appropriate for certain types of groups. For instance, a blue-collar worker may feel out of place in a group full of physicians and college professors.

Advantages of Individual Therapy:

- The client receives the full attention of the therapist and is able to work with the therapist on a one-on-one basis. This results in a very focused and intense therapeutic experience.
- The client gets direct feedback on their progress from the therapist, and the therapist has a more complete understanding of the client's progress.
- The therapeutic alliance is strongest in individual sessions.
- The client can be assured that the therapist will maintain the confidentiality of the treatment sessions and that no one else will learn about their issues.
- Treatment in individual sessions is much more comprehensive and intense.
- The pace that the therapist and client work at can be tailored to suit the needs of the specific client. This cannot be achieved in group sessions because the pace is often adjusted to meet the needs of the slowest members.
- Meeting times for therapy sessions can be arranged to fit the client's schedule and can be adjusted depending on specific circumstances, whereas this is not the case for group sessions.

Disadvantages of Individual Therapy:

- Individual sessions are typically more costly than group sessions.

- While being the sole focus of attention can be considered an advantage to individual sessions, it can also be disadvantageous to some individuals. Some people may wish to have a little “camouflage” initially until they can adjust to the therapeutic environment.
- Some individuals who have issues with motivation may struggle when they are the sole focus of attention.
- The client only gets the viewpoint of the therapist and does not get multiple viewpoints.

Insight Therapy:

- Insight Therapy is a type of psychotherapy in which the therapist helps their patient to understand how their feelings, beliefs, actions, and events from the past are influencing their current mindset. Importance is placed on the relationship between the therapist and the patient with the therapist identifying behavioral patterns from the patient's past that could be affecting their behavior and relationships at the present time.
- The therapist helps the patient gain insight into their past that can be used to address issues that are currently happening. For example, a therapist has a patient with low self-esteem issues. Through talking and analyzing the patient's past the therapist would help the patient identify the causes for their low self esteem (being bullied as a child, non-supportive parents, weight issues) and how these past scenarios are affecting their behavior and feelings in the present.
- The therapist would then direct the patient to methods of avoiding these negative thought patterns and directing them towards more positive ways of thinking. By gaining insight about their past the patient can alleviate problems in the present.

Action Therapy:

- Action therapy, also called action-oriented therapy, is a form of psychotherapy that focuses on practical solutions to mental health problems. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is one of the most commonly used forms of action therapy.
- Advocates of action therapy often believe that practical solutions are the most important aspect of psychological treatment. They focus on teaching patients coping skills to help them manage everyday life and avoid harmful thought patterns. In cognitive-behavioral therapy, for example, patients learn how to identify cognitive distortions that cause or exacerbate their mental illness and how to replace those harmful beliefs with positive ones. Interpersonal-and-social-rhythm therapy is another type of action therapy. Interpersonal-and-social-rhythm therapy helps patients learn to manage their moods by creating daily routines and support structures that contribute to a stable mental state.
- Action therapy practitioners often emphasize scientific evidence in developing a treatment plan. Cognitive-behavioral therapy has been proven effective for a number of mental illnesses.

Psychoanalysis:

- Psychoanalysis is defined as a set of psychological theories and therapeutic methods which have their origin in the work and theories of Sigmund Freud.
- The primary assumption of psychoanalysis is the belief that all people possess unconscious thoughts, feelings, desires, and memories.
- The aim of psychoanalysis therapy is to release repressed emotions and experiences, i.e., make the unconscious conscious. It is only having a cathartic (i.e., healing) experience can the person be helped and "cured."

Basic Assumptions:

- Psychoanalytic psychologists see psychological problems as rooted in the unconscious mind.
 - Manifest symptoms are caused by latent (hidden) disturbances.
 - Typical causes include unresolved issues during development or repressed trauma.
 - Freud believed that people could be cured by making conscious their unconscious thoughts and motivations, thus gaining insight.
 - Treatment focuses on bringing the repressed conflict to consciousness, where the client can deal with it.
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 - ✓ Manifest symptoms are caused by latent (hidden) disturbances.
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 - ✓ Treatment focuses on bringing the repressed conflict to consciousness, where the client can deal with it.
 - ✓ Due to the nature of defense mechanisms and the inaccessibility of the deterministic forces operating in the unconscious, psychoanalysis in its classic form is a lengthy process often involving 2 to 5 sessions per week for several years.
 - ✓ This approach assumes that the reduction of symptoms alone is relatively inconsequential as if the underlying conflict is not resolved, more neurotic symptoms will simply be substituted.
 - ✓ The analyst typically is a 'blank screen,' disclosing very little about himself so that the client can use the space in the relationship to work on their unconscious without interference from outside.
 - ✓ The psychoanalyst uses various techniques as encouragement for the client to develop insights into their behavior and the meanings of symptoms, including inkblots, parapraxes, free association, interpretation (including dream analysis), resistance analysis and transference analysis.

Procedures of Psychoanalytic Therapy:

1. Rorschach inkblots

- Due to the nature of defense mechanisms and the inaccessibility of the deterministic forces operating in the unconscious,
- The inkblot itself doesn't mean anything, it's ambiguous (i.e., unclear). It is what you read into it that is important. Different people will see different things depending on what unconscious connections they make.
- The inkblot is known as a projective test as the patient 'projects' information from their unconscious mind to interpret the inkblot.
- However, behavioral psychologists such as B.F. Skinner have criticized this method as being subjective and unscientific.

Defense Mechanisms

- Sigmund Freud (1894, 1896) noted a number of ego defenses which he refers to throughout his written works. His daughter [Anna Freud](#) (1936) developed these ideas and elaborated on them, adding ten of her own. Many psychoanalysts have also added further types of ego defenses.
- Defense mechanisms are psychological strategies that are unconsciously used to protect a person from anxiety arising from unacceptable thoughts or feelings.

Mechanism	Description	Example
Repression	Repression is an unconscious mechanism employed by the ego to keep disturbing or threatening thoughts from becoming conscious.	During the Oedipus complex aggressive thoughts about the same sex parents are repressed
Denial	Denial involves blocking external events from awareness. If some situation is just too much to handle, the person just refuses to experience it.	For example, smokers may refuse to admit to themselves that smoking is bad for their health.
Projection	This involves individuals attributing their own unacceptable thoughts, feeling and motives to another person.	You might hate someone, but your superego tells you that such hatred is unacceptable. You can 'solve' the problem by believing that they hate you.
Displacement	Satisfying an impulse (e.g. aggression) with a substitute object.	Someone who is frustrated by his or her boss at work may go home and kick the dog,
Regression	This is a movement back in psychological time when one is faced with stress.	A child may begin to suck their thumb again or wet the bed when they need to spend some time in the hospital.
Sublimation	Satisfying an impulse (e.g. aggression) with a substitute object. In a socially acceptable way.	Sport is an example of putting our emotions (e.g. aggression) into something constructive.

2. Freudian Slip

- Unconscious thoughts and feelings can transfer to the conscious mind in the form of parapraxes, popularly known as Freudian slips or slips of the tongue. We reveal what is really on our mind by saying something we didn't mean to.
- For example, a nutritionist giving a lecture intended to say we should always demand the best in bread, but instead said bed. Another example is where a person may call a friend's new partner by the name of a previous one, whom we liked better.
- Freud believed that slips of the tongue provided an insight into the unconscious mind and that there were no accidents, every behavior (including slips of the tongue) was significant (i.e., all behavior is determined).

3. Free Association

- Free association is a practice in psychoanalytic therapy, in which a patient talks of whatever comes into their mind. This technique involves a therapist giving a word or idea, and the patient immediately responds with the first word that comes to mind.
- It is hoped that fragments of repressed memories will emerge in the course of free association, giving an insight into the unconscious mind.
- Free association may not prove useful if the client shows resistance, and is reluctant to say what he or she is thinking. On the other hand, the presence of resistance (e.g., an excessively long pause) often provides a strong clue that the client is getting close to some important repressed idea in his or her thinking, and that further probing by the therapist is called for.
- Freud reported that his free associating patients occasionally experienced such an emotionally intense and vivid memory that they almost relived the experience. This is like a "flashback" from a war or a rape experience.
- Such a stressful memory, so real it feels like it is happening again, is called an abreaction. If such a disturbing memory occurred in therapy or with a supportive friend and one felt better--relieved or cleansed--later, it would be called a catharsis.
- Frequently, these intensely emotional experiences provided Freud a valuable insight into the patient's problems.

4. Dream Analysis

- According to Freud the analysis of dreams is "the royal road to the unconscious." He argued that the conscious mind is like a censor, but it is less vigilant when we are asleep.
- As a result, repressed ideas come to the surface - though what we remember may well have been altered during the dream process.
- As a result, we need to distinguish between the manifest content and the latent content of a dream. The former is what we actually remember.
- The latter is what it really means. Freud believed that very often the real meaning of a dream had a sexual significance and in his theory of sexual symbolism he speculates on the underlying meaning of common dream themes.

Adlerian Therapy

Individual therapy, or Adlerian therapy, is an approach in which a therapist works with a client to identify obstacles and create effective strategies for working towards their goals. Adlerians believe that, by gaining insight into challenges, people can overcome *feelings of inferiority*. Moreover, Adlerians believe that people are most fulfilled when they are working towards the *social interest*; that is, when they are doing things that are beneficial for society as a whole.

Key Takeaways: Adlerian Therapy

- Adlerian therapy, also known as individual therapy, emphasizes the individual's ability to bring about positive change in his or her own life.
- Adlerian therapy consists of four stages: engagement, assessment, insight, and reorientation.
- In Adler's theory, individuals work to overcome feelings of inferiority and to act in ways that benefit the social interest.

Four Stages of Adlerian Therapy

In Adler's approach to therapy, termed *individual psychology* or *Adlerian psychology*, therapy progresses through a series of four stages:

1. **Engagement.** The client and therapist begin to establish the therapeutic relationship. The relationship should consist of collaboration towards addressing the client's problems. The therapist should offer support and encouragement.
2. **Assessment.** The therapist works to learn more about the client's background, including early memories and family dynamics. In this part of therapy, the therapist attempts to understand how the client may have developed certain styles of thinking that are no longer helpful or adaptive for them.
3. **Insight.** The therapist offers an interpretation of the client's situation. The therapist suggests theories about how past experiences may have contributed to issues the client is currently experiencing; importantly, the therapist leaves it up to the client to decide whether these theories are accurate and useful.
4. **Reorientation.** The therapist helps the client to develop new strategies that the client can use in daily life.

Feelings of Inferiority

One of Adler's most well known ideas is that everyone experiences *feelings of inferiority* (i.e. worries that one is not achieving enough). Among psychologically healthy individuals, these feelings of inferiority encourage the pursuit of goals, providing motivation to strive towards self-improvement. In other words, by developing positive ways of coping with feelings of inferiority,

individuals can end up achieving great things and making a positive contribution to society as a whole.

However, some individuals have difficulty coping with feelings of inferiority, which leads them to feel discouraged. Other individuals may cope with feelings of inferiority in unproductive ways, like behaving selfishly in order to feel superior to others. In Adlerian therapy, the therapist works to provide the client the support and encouragement they need in order to cope more effectively with feelings of inferiority and to develop healthy ways of overcoming these feelings.

Social Interest

One of Adler's other key ideas was the concept of the *social interest*. According to this idea, people are at their best—their psychologically healthiest and most fulfilled—when they act in ways that benefit society. For example, a person high in social interest might go out of their way to help others, while a person with lower levels of social interest may bully others or act in antisocial ways. Importantly, levels of social interest can change over time. A therapist can help their client increase his or her levels of social interest.

Alfred Adler's Life and Legacy

Alfred Adler was born in the suburbs outside of Vienna, Austria in 1870. He studied medicine at the University of Vienna, graduating in 1895. After medical school, Adler first worked as an ophthalmologist, but later decided to study psychiatry. He was initially a colleague of Sigmund Freud, with whom he cofounded the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. However, he later split with Freud and went on to develop his own ideas about psychiatry. Adler developed the approach to therapy known as *individual psychology*, and in 1912, he founded the Society of Individual Psychology.

Today, Adler's influence can be found in numerous areas of psychology. Many his ideas have found support in the burgeoning field of positive psychology, and his emphasis on the individual's social context (e.g. family setting and larger culture) is supported in many branches of contemporary psychology.