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What Is Psychotherapy? How Does It Help?©

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We will define psychotherapy for you. Then we will tell you the details of eight therapies commonly used at Shorehaven.

In order to understand emotional problems and to help you recover from them, Psychotherapy uses proven principles of psychology. With a deep understanding of the mind and behavior, psychotherapists study the ways to change behaviors that cause our symptoms, impairments, and problems. Psychotherapy is designed for CHANGE

*to change thinking patterns
to change behavioral reactions
to change emotional reactions
to change behaviors*

We help create changes in the directions that are more desirable for healthy emotional adjustment – free of psychiatric symptoms.

We use these psychological principles, among others:

- **learning**, such as learning new skills for coping, social relationships, management of emotions and behavior
- **emotions** and feelings, such as understanding our emotional reactions, where we learned to react in those ways, how to tolerate life's distresses, how to manage emotions
- **motivation**, for instance, our ability to commit to making changes and to see the old way of

responding is not helping and may be contributing to problems

- **language**, to shift how we think about and label our behaviors
- **perspective**, to change our point of view towards a healthier, more balanced view
- **human development**, to note where we are expected to be in our development, especially children and adolescent, where we are behind expectations, and how to get back on track
- **relationship development**, as relationships have stages and mature, just as people do
- **family and couple relationships**, which we think of as systems, patterns of interacting, patterns of attachment, patterns of support, alliances within a family, the systems (parents, parent-child, siblings, extended family) in the family and how well they are functioning
- **interpersonal social behavior**, the way we relate to others, the social skills and social intelligence we exhibit
- **behavior change methods**, the methods for changing habits and patterns that are at the core of treatment
- **support, empathy and compassion**, essential to the human connection at the heart of therapy
- **acceptance** of the individual(s) -- understanding that given all the forces and influences in each life, each person is doing as well as he or she can
- **conditioning**, the way we learn to respond to stimuli around us
- **reinforcement**, the principles for strengthening behaviors
- **neuropsychology**, the understanding of how the brain works and contributes to behavior

With such a complex of psychological principles at the heart of therapy, it is no wonder it takes 6 years of higher education and 2 years of post-Masters training to become a psychotherapist.

The most important factor is a special professional relationship, called the **Therapeutic Relationship**. Researchers have broken that down into a few crucial elements.

☆ *Therapeutic Alliance -- agreement on the importance of therapy, the goals of the therapy, the methods to be used*

☆ *Rapport -- a feeling of connection, bond, compatibility*

☆ *Empathy – therapist capacity to understand how the client feels*

- ☆ *Hope – increasing hope that the problems can be solved and symptoms can be reduced*
- ☆ *Understanding -- of the inner thoughts, feelings, and patterns in the clients mind and thinking*
- ☆ *Acceptance – that the client is doing as well as he or she can, trying to adapt*
- ☆ *Openness – that the client shares his or her thoughts, emotions, history, and perceptions*

Some of the psychotherapies most used at Shorehaven are explained below.

- 1. Alcohol and Drug Counseling**
- 2. Behavior Therapy**
- 3. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**
- 4. EMDR**
- 5. Family Systems and Marriage Therapy**
- 6. Mindfulness**
- 7. Psychoanalytic (Psychodynamic)**
- 8. Solution Focused Brief Therapy**

Alcohol and Drug Counseling

(also called AODA Counseling, Chemical Dependency Counseling, or Substance Abuse Counseling (SAC), Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Counseling)

Who Developed This Method?

AODA Counseling has been developing since the 1870's. The founding of Alcoholics Anonymous in the 1930's, the development of modern counseling programs in the past 40 years, and a large amount of research in recent decades on what helps... have all moved AODA Counseling from hospitals and into clinics, where the outcome of counseling is equally effective with that found in hospitals. In the past 10-20 years, AODA counseling has stopped being entirely separate from Mental Health therapy, and more counselors such as ours at Shorehaven are trained in both AODA and Mental Health.

How the Method Explains the Development of Problems

AODA Counselors consider addiction (also called dependency) to be a kind of disease. One can be addicted to substances, such as alcohol (including beer, wine, liquor), amphetamines (speed), opioids (e.g., heroin, morphine, oxycodone), cocaine, marijuana, tobacco, or certain prescription drugs, especially tranquilizers and pain medications. You may be surprised to learn that one can be addicted to activities; in the brain, the effect is similar to the addiction to chemicals. These activities include gambling, compulsive sex behavior, food, spending, and Internet use.

Addiction is marked by *tolerance* for large amounts of the substance or activity, devoting more and more of your life to getting and using the chemical or activity, adverse reactions when stopping use [*withdrawal*], and *loss of control* after starting so that you do more of it than you intend or you can't stop with only a small amount. These problems are usually chronic, with frequent relapses.

These problems are on a continuum with:

- *Addiction at one extreme, also called Dependency

- *Abuse, which is use despite the negative consequences of using

- *Problem Use

- *Social Use

- *Abstinence at the other end of the spectrum.



Typically, the person finds the substance or activity very rewarding, often making one feel more normal, less depressed, more sociable, or more relaxed. Eventually, the addictive and harmful nature of the chemical or activity takes over one's life.

Counselors work with problem use and abuse in order to interrupt the decline into addiction.

How the Method Explains the Process of Change

AODA Counselors use many methods to help.

1. Motivational Enhancement (also called Motivational Interviewing) helps determine your readiness for change and helps you be more prepared to make effective changes.

2. Rational-Emotive or Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy methods help change the thought patterns which you use, the ones where you tell yourself the behavior is okay, the ways you rationalize or minimize or deny the problem.

3. 12-Step programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, etc., use group support and a program of spiritual and behavioral guidelines to help you take responsibility for changing.

4. Substance Counseling Techniques, such identifying triggers for excessive use, anticipating events so one can cope with them without a chemical, changing thinking patterns about using, rehearsing responses to events, and changing lifestyle.

5. Relapse Prevention identifies the triggers and patterns for using so you can learn ways to handle them differently without lapsing back to using.

Behavior Therapy

Who Developed This Method?

Many researchers contributed to Behavior Therapy, including Nathan Azrin [contingency management], Albert Bandura [use of models, vicarious conditioning], Neal Miller [biofeedback], I. Pavlov [conditioning], B.F. Skinner [reinforcement], Joseph Wolpe [systematic desensitization], and many others. Although the basic psychological principles were well developed earlier, Behavior Therapy are a treatment developed out of research beginning around 1970.

How the Method Explains the Development of Problems

Inappropriate, dysfunctional behaviors are learned. Symptoms are learned – e.g., we learn to avoid situations in which we fear having high anxiety. To continue, anxiety problems result from becoming anxious, escaping from the situation, then the anxiety goes down. That reinforces avoiding those situations in the future.

Substance use results from the enjoyment of the chemical and/or the reduction in discomfort the chemical may bring. Then we seek that feeling again. The chemical reinforces continuing to use it.

Behavior Therapists do not try to explain 'why' you are behaving a certain way. They do not think emotions and thoughts are as important to therapy as are observations of overt behavior. Rather, they focus on methods that are effective in changing observed behavior. Problems develop when the consequences of the behavior are favorable (i.e., reinforcing), making the behavior likely to recur when the same circumstance arises in the future. It may be challenging to decipher which reinforcers maintain unhelpful behaviors, but therapists work with you to figure that out.

How the Method Explains the Process of Change

Researchers have evolved many methods for direct behavior change, including relaxation therapy, which uses deep relaxation in order to change our reactions to stressful stimuli. In systematic desensitization, stimuli which now produce anxiety are carefully presented until the anxiety associated with them stops. In biofeedback, we learn to control the physiological reactions, such as brain waves, hand temperature, and muscle tension that may be associated with problems. In contingency contracting, which is often used in couples or with children, we set up a schedule for reinforcing a desirable behavior and for stopping reinforcement for undesirable behavior. Thought Stopping and Exposure Therapy are used to interfere with anxiety. Exposure with response prevention is used with OCD.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Who Developed This Method?

The forerunner of this method is Alfred Adler, but the most important modern cognitive therapists have been Aaron Beck, Albert Ellis, and Donald Meichenbaum, beginning around 1960.

How the Method Explains the Development of Problems

Beliefs. Thoughts, feelings, and behavior are related. Emotions affect our thoughts. But our beliefs and thoughts affect our emotions and how we behave. For example, if you think you must please others and it is disastrous if someone does not like you, you will feel anxious and upset when someone does not accept you – or just imagining they might not. A range of such beliefs affects depression, anxiety, substance use, and many other conditions, which are heavily influenced by our beliefs.

Cognitive Errors. Furthermore, we all have certain *errors of thinking* which affect how we react, such as *personalizing* what happens around us, *black and white thinking*, *catastrophic thinking* about the future, self-reproach when things go wrong, intolerance for uncertainty, and many other errors in thinking that may be brought to your attention. Negativity Bias is looking for information that is negative and discounting positive information. Confirmation Bias is only attending to information consistent with what you already believe. Psychologists have described almost 50 error processes and how they cause problems.

How the Method Explains the Process of Change

The counselor will use four strategies.

1. Helping articulate and change inaccurate, dysfunctional beliefs, which a person may never before have realized he or she was using. For example, “Nothing ever turns out for me” is probably a belief from childhood and does not fit all that has happened since. People with this belief often have many positive experiences they are discounting. The belief is a Negativity Bias and also Global Thinking (big, over-general ideas). When we identify an old, inaccurate belief, we will point it out.
2. Helping recognize errors in thinking so one can try other ways of evaluating experiences. We look for these errors in thinking so clients can correct them. For instance, we will work to correct Selective Attention to Negative Information, Personalizing what others do that may have no relationship to the client, or Catastrophizing that the person may not realize he or she was doing. In fact, we are all rarely aware of these errors in our thinking.
3. Helping you use techniques to make changes in your thinking, such as exercises in thinking the old way and a new way. We may have you compare your emotional reactions to thinking the old way and the new way. We may look for triggers that stimulate irrational beliefs.

4. Behavior Change and Behavior Activation are actions to take that directly change reactions. Or we suggest actions which, after doing those actions, lead us to revise our self-appraisal. Some of these are relaxation methods, thought-stopping, or progressive systematic exposure to a situation one has avoided.

EMDR [Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing]

Who Developed This Method?

In 1989, Francine Shapiro noticed the effect of eye movements for reducing the impact of traumatic memories. She published her research showing how EMDR significantly reduced the emotions associated with painful memories. Some clients could barely remember the event. Since then, EMDR has become the most highly researched method for treating trauma and has been applied to treating anxiety, depression, children, and many other problems.

How the Method Explains the Development of Problems

When painful experiences happen, they become impressed in the brain. To avoid the discomfort of the memories and to prevent a recurrence of the event, the mind remembers the event and feels anxiety when exposed to reminders of the event. Then, the event can be so upsetting that we keep re-experiencing it. Memories of it are so vivid, it seems as if the event happened just yesterday.

How the Method Explains the Process of Change

How EMDR heals and does so rapidly is still being investigated. The idea is the memory is ‘stuck’ in that it can not move on into our history the way other memories do. It stays current. We know a few areas in the brain – the amygdala and hippocampus among them – can be conditioned to overly respond to the stimuli from the event.

We also know the EMDR activates these brain centers to, in effect, re-write the memory. Treatment causes the memory to become more a piece of history rather than a currently troubling event. As a result, the emotions related to the memory subside. Then depression and anxiety that may be associated with the memory also lift.

Family Systems and Marriage Therapy

Who Developed This Method?

Beginning in the 1950s, Murray Bowen, Jay Haley, Salvador Minuchin, Virginia Satir, John Watzlawick, Michael White, and others began to examine how family members, including couples, influence one another and produce or maintain emotional problems. The richness of family systems therapy is reflected in the fact that a large number of valuable methods and ideas about families have arisen in the past few decades.

How the Method Explains the Development of Problems

Problems seem to arise in families in several ways. In one case, members of the family view one another in certain ways and behave towards one another in light of those views. For example, a child who is labeled as "bad" or "incorrigible" may not receive much positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior. The child begins to get "negative attention," that is, most of his or her involvement with parents is around inappropriate behavior. How much positive attention members receive, how parents work together, the boundaries between generations, the exercise of authority, the protection of children, and many other aspects of family functioning affect emotions, self-esteem, and behavior. Changes in the family, such as birth of a child or a loss, may affect how the family members cope.

How the Method Explains the Process of Change

Marriage and Family Therapists (MFT) use many methods, all of which are designed to help family members alter the way they interact with one another. For example, finding and building on the strengths and positive attributes of a child can help him or her behave in new ways. Helping the family members realize their strengths and areas of effective functioning helps refocus their interactions.

The idea is that members of the family unwittingly reinforce the behavior they would like to see change! So, they need an outsider to observe their patterns and to guide members to change those patterns. Everyone knows how repetitive conflicts and disagreements can be, like a roller coaster that we can't get off of. That's where the MFT comes in:

- to change interaction in a way that permits behavior to change
- to make sure the parents or adults in the child's life are squarely and effectively working together
- to educate the family about the effects of illness and/or addiction on the family
- to change how family members view one another
- for couples, to help the couple relate to one another in order to meet their respective needs more effectively

Psychoanalytic (Psychodynamic)

Who Developed This Method?

Sigmund Freud began this method in 1890. Anna Freud, Heinz Kohut, Carl Jung, James Masterson and a host of others have contributed to our knowledge of the deeper mental processes which affect our behavior. More has been written about this method than any other and it is an evolving, dynamic field that has incorporated ideas from a range of approaches.

How the Method Explains the Development of Problems.

Our emotional impulses and feelings are often associated with fear of rejection, fear of disapproval, guilt, shame, or other negative feelings. When this happens, we may repress these feelings and any associated thoughts or memories so that they become unconscious. Defense mechanisms, such as rationalizing, repressing, acting out, and many others, are unconscious methods we use to reduce the anxiety and emotional discomfort or pain we feel. Defenses and repressed feelings and memories are often behind our symptoms. For example, sometimes depression is the result of repressing guilt about being angry towards a person who died, so that grieving cannot proceed normally.

How the Method Explains the Process of Change.

The goals of therapy are to help you be conscious of the underlying emotions, impulses, and memories which may be behind your symptoms. In addition, the therapist will guide you towards more effective defenses and methods of managing with your impulses and needs. The therapist will ask for your 'free associations' [the report of what goes through your mind], dreams, and other information which will help uncover your unconscious patterns. The therapist will help you gain insight into your feelings. We will look for early experiences that continue to shape your reactions. Research shows psychodynamic therapy has as good a result as the best therapies and the result can be lasting, and even increase over time.

Solution Focused Brief Therapy

Who Developed This Method?

Insoo Berg and Steve deShazer are among the team members of the Brief Therapy Training Center who developed this approach from the mid-1980s in Milwaukee. It is now used the world over.

How the Method Explains the Development of Problems

People tend to focus on behavior that is involved with problems, complaints, and things that are not going well. We overlook behavior associated with more effective actions or positive experiences. Often, with a limited range of behaviors to try, we tend to try the same ineffective solutions over and over. For instance, with an angry, misbehaving child, we try more and more discipline, even though it is not working to change the problem. We lose sight of the child's abilities, times of cooperation, and areas of strength.

How the Method Explains the Process of Change

The therapist will evaluate times when the problem is not present or what could happen when the problem is resolved. He or she will help you determine what behavior was occurring then, what skills and abilities you were using when you were more effective, and how to implement those skills to change the problem now.

We have surveyed eight of the most common types of therapy you will find at our clinic and many others. The field of psychotherapy has evolved for 130 years. During that time, numerous therapies have been developed and have been studied. The best techniques have been integrated into the work we do. Some methods, such as psychoanalytic techniques and client-centered techniques are so lasting that they form the very bedrock of the field of psychotherapy.

At the same time, we have found some very focused methods we use for narrower problems. And we have studied more complex methods to use for complicated, long-standing problems.

Overall, we help 80-90% of people. It is hard to find an area of medicine that is much more successful.

Contact us at (414) 540-2170 or www.shorehavenbhi.com