

The sections below provide some further insight into the different approaches to psychological therapy; however, it is important to remember that psychological therapy in the field of counselling psychology is likely to include an integration of different approaches that meet the specific presenting issue of a particular client. It is also important to recognise that Kazdin (1986) identified over 400 different types of psychological therapy!

THE PSYCHOANALYTIC-PSYCHODYNAMIC APPROACH

- This approach emphasises the unconscious and, traditionally, the balance of intrapsychic forces.
- It is suggested that human defences are constructed to keep difficult intrapsychic conflicts at bay.
- The purpose of therapy is to uncover these conflicts and work through them in the here and now context of the relationship with the therapist.
- There is an emphasis on the linking of the 'there and then' with the 'here and now', especially with an emphasis on what is termed the 'transference' dynamics; this refers to the tendency of human beings to transfer aspects of earlier experience into current functioning that might, for example, involve experiencing current hierarchical relationships in a way that has similar features to early relationships in the family settings with both parents as well as other key authoritative figures (e.g. teachers) in a range of childhood settings.

THE COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH

- This approach aligns itself more directly with a connection between human and animal research; learning and the conditioning process is considered to be particularly important.
- The emphasis, traditionally, is on the identification and understanding of different aspects of thoughts, feelings and behaviours, with a particular emphasis on the implications of thinking patterns on how a person feels, and how they consequently behave.
- It is important in this tradition to articulate clearly the presenting issues of the client and to be clear about the objective goals of the therapeutic engagement.
- The emphasis in this approach is on what is often described as 'collaborative empiricism', that is, an emphasis on working together with the client to identify observable issues and deciding together how to monitor these (i.e. through 'homework' assignments or the use of diaries).

THE HUMANISTIC/EXISTENTIAL APPROACH

- There are many approaches within this tradition, but all tend to emphasise a constructivist and social constructionist position; this emphasis focuses on meaning and on the human being's aspirations for belonging, contact and health, as well as on the ways in which meaning is a co-constructed phenomenon.
- The key issue is on the client as a person and the importance of taking a holistic perspective to a particular client and their current difficulty.
- The interest in this approach is on empathy, genuineness of contact, an acceptance of the client on their own terms, a 'real' dialogue and an emphasis on here and now exploration and creative experimentation.
- An important idea is that as human beings we need to deal with some key elements of life, such as belonging, death, uncertainty and the making of meaning, that pose challenges for all human beings, including psychological therapists!