

## BEHAVIOR THERAPY

The modern behaviorial approach is based on a scientific view of human behavior that stresses a systematic and structured approach to counseling. Behavior therapy refers to a diversity of techniques and procedures that are rooted in a variety of learning theories. It is quite heterogeneous and eclectic. There is no single theory undergirding the position of behavior therapy.

The general goal of behavior therapy is based on the rationale of creating new conditions for learning. Behavior therapy specifically attempts to eliminate faulty behavior and to help clients acquire new skills. The client is an active agent and a real partner in this therapeutic process. Its concepts and procedures are stated explicitly, tested empirically, and revised continually. The ultimate application of behavioral concepts (Williams and Long) is viewed as self-modification thru the self-management approach.

Goals occupy a place of central importance in behavior therapy. In most groups, the initial stages are devoted to identifying and formulating a specific set of goals. These goals must be concrete, problematic behaviors they want to change. Most important of all, goals provide a framework for evaluating the outcome of counseling. The task of the leader is to breakdown broad, general goals into concrete, specific, and measurable goals.

A treatment to define and achieve these goals (i.e., cognitive restructuring, relaxation training, systematic desensitization, self-monitoring, self-reinforcement and homework assignments) is formulated after members have specified their goals. A clear trend in modern behavior therapy is toward involving the client in the selection of goals.

It is the therapists task to select therapeutic strategies designed to meet these goals. It is at this point that the client and therapist negotiate a therapeutic contract. A written, signed contract is recommended that specifies agreements on the goals, methods, and procedural rules of treatment.

Behavior therapists must take an active, directive role in applying scientific knowledge to discovering solutions to human problems. The behavior therapist actually functions as a teacher, director, and expert in diagnosing maladaptive behavior and in prescribing procedures that will lead to new and improved behavior. Clients, on the other hand, must be taught to take specific action in order to change behavior.

A good personal relationship is an essential part of the therapeutic process. It appears that most behavior therapists do not assign an all important role to the relationship variable. Nonetheless, most of them do assert that factors such as warmth, empathy, authenticity and acceptance are considered necessary for behavior change.

Also known as social skills training and personal effectiveness training, assertion training is a behavioral approach that has gained popularity. The basic assumption is that people have the right (but not the obligation) to express their feelings, thoughts, beliefs and attitudes. Assertion training can be helpful for those who cannot express anger or irritation, who have difficulty saying no, who are overly polite and allow others to take advantage of them, who have difficulty expressing affection, and those who feel they have a right to their own feelings and thoughts. Assertion does not, however, mean aggression.

#### REFERENCES

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