



Enriching Lives

Psychotherapy: A Process of Empowerment

Effective psychotherapy can be transformative and improve quality of life. Therapy can be used to enhance psychological health. Psychological health can be described as having the capacity to enjoy one's life, have a sense of self-worth, be comfortable around others, have satisfying relationships, encounter and enjoy the responsibilities that one derives from work, school or family life, and meet life's challenges. Psychotherapy is a process that can be empowering, foster optimism and autonomy in the individuals seeking professional assistance. Therapy can enrich the life of any individual committed to self-improvement. Psychotherapy as a compassionate and change-oriented process can promote personal growth and development.

In Greek, psychotherapy means healing of the soul. In today's discourse, most individuals tend to associate psychotherapy with the healing of the mind. A significant portion of people inaccurately assume that therapy is solely for individuals with problems or who are weak-minded. Such a belief system is erroneous. This belief system is rooted in the medical/disease model, which assumes that individuals are ill and need to be treated by an expert. This model assumes that your treating provider has the knowledge needed to treat the patient without much input from the client. Such a paradigm places the provider in a one-up position where the patient has little influence in their treatment. Notice the term "patient" inherently implies illness. The medical/disease model may conceptualize and treat the diagnosis rather than assist the client holistically and neglect to assess outside forces that may be influencing the client's presenting concerns. Instead, therapists may utilize a personal growth model that focuses on client needs and emphasizes client strengths and resources. The term patient is not used in identifying clients. Clients input is solicited, highly respected and valued. Clients collaborate with their therapists in determining what areas in their lives can use improvement. Clients are viewed as the agent of change, being responsible for the change they are seeking with the sound guidance of their therapist. Hence, clients are viewed as capable and resourceful agents whom with a supportive, compassionate and knowledgeable therapist are able to enhance their lives.

Also, the inaccurate ideology that therapy is reserved for individuals with problems represents a very limited view of therapy as a valuable resource and process; and is a narrow analysis of its application to the real world. Psychotherapy is much more profound in its application. Therapy can be used to enhance all areas of one's life. Everyone can benefit from therapy at certain points in their life cycle. You do not need to have a problem or a diagnosis to receive the rewards of therapy. Therapy can be used to improve one's mental, emotional or spiritual state, relationships, career or academic performance. Therapy can be used to achieve a productive life, lead a meaningful existence that is reflective and congruent to one's core values and reach one's highest potential.

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Psychotherapy is a collaborative effort between the client and their therapist in identifying the client's goals, formulating a plan to attain those goals and measuring one's progress. Therapy is an empowering process that is used to teach the clients to become proactive about the change they desire, cultivate independence and the self-confidence needed to implement the effective strategies gained during treatment in the real world. The intention is to teach clients to employ the constructive coping mechanisms learned during the therapeutic process to their lives. The goal is to strengthen client's sense of self, improve their functioning and eliminate dependence on therapy. **To become an informed and proactive consumer of psychological services ask the following questions when seeking professional assistance:**

- **What is your philosophy of therapy?**
- **Who is the agent of change?**
- **Do you adhere to the medical or disease model?**

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