Cognitive and Behavior Therapy

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Period 2

May 2, 2016

Treatment for people who are suffering from psychological disturbances has come a long way in terms of the methods of treating them and helping resolve their issues or conflicts, when in the past these people who had personal issues were often viewed as being inhabited by demons and that the only form of treatment was an exorcism. But in today’s modern world there are various methods of therapy when someone is in dire need of resolving an issue or trying to change an undesirable behavior. There are various methods as to how and resolve the issues that are troubling the patient. Cognitive and behavior therapy are two of the most common methods used today in trying to help a patient change their thought processes or undesirable behavior. Both of these methods strive to strengthen the patient’s control of his or her life, and to change something about themselves that they dislike.

The various forms of cognitive therapies share basic assumptions which are faulty cognitions, irrational or uninformed beliefs, or expectations one has of themselves. Aaron T. Becks form of cognitive therapy focuses on the illogical and irrational thought processes that is afflicting a person. In order to improve their life, they need to change their way of thinking and way of viewing themselves so that they can get better and improve their lives. In this form of cognitive therapy, the therapists uses persuasion and logic to change the person’s beliefs about themselves. The therapist may suggest to the patient that they test one of those beliefs they have of themselves. The therapist may then ask the patient to look at past experiences that in the end prove contradictory to what they believe about themselves. Overall the therapist strives to show the patient that his or her beliefs may be false and things are not as bad as they may seem. The role of the therapist is to determine the pace and direction that is the best therapy for the patient, and will produce the best outcome. The therapist may even assign homework for the patient to do. The overall goal of Beck’s cognitive therapy is to change the way in which people think.

Another form of cognitive therapy developed by Albert Ellis called rational-emotive therapy (RET) is a form of treatment in which it changes false assumptions about oneself. It uses reason, logic, and rationality to determine the false cognitive processes, and learn to express emotion more appropriately. The goal of rational-emotive therapy is to correct the false beliefs the person has. In order to convince the patient that those self-defeating beliefs are unrealistic the therapist teaches the patient to think in realistic terms. The therapists will use a variety of techniques to help the patient which includes role playing, modeling, humor, and persuasion. These techniques will be used to show and convince the patient just how silly and false their beliefs about themselves or others really are. In this form of therapy, the therapist may also give homework such as having the patient do something they would otherwise never do. Also apart of Ellis’s cognitive therapy is what he calls the ABCs. A refers to the Activating event or adversity, B is the person’s Belief system about the event, and C is the Consequences that follow the event. In therapy the therapist will try and change B, which is the belief (Psychologist World, n.d.). In rational-emotive therapy the patient would generally be taught that having negative beliefs about themselves, contributes to negative outcomes, but that having positive beliefs will lead to positive outcomes and good results.

Behavior therapy is changing undesirable behavior through conditioning techniques and strategies. Rather than in cognitive therapy where it primarily focuses on one’s thought processes, behavior therapy is more focused on one’s behavior. The therapist rather than spending time focusing on looking into the patients past, the therapist focuses on what exactly is troubling the patient’s life at that moment. The goal of behavior therapy is to modify one’s behavior that the patient finds to be troublesome and undesirable (McLeod, S.A, 2010). A strategy used in behavior therapy is systematic desensitization. Systematic desensitization is a counterconditioning technique used overcome the irrational fears that the patient has. The goal of systematic desensitization is done to encourage people to face their irrational fear while maintaining relaxed, which will then make them realize that they don’t have to be afraid. The therapist helps the patient overcome their fears, by guiding them step by step until they no longer have that irrational fear.

Behavior therapy also includes, aversive conditioning, token economies, and operant conditioning. Aversive conditioning’s goal is to make specific actions unpleasant and undesirable so that they will become avoided. Operant conditioning is a technique used, which is based upon the assumption that behavior that is reinforced normally tends to become repeated, while behavior that is not reinforced tends to be eliminated. The therapists and patient decide what undesirable behavior they want to get rid of and instead what new and desirable behavior needs to be reinforced using contingency management. Once that undesirable act is associated with an unpleasant stimulus, the person is able to form a link between the two and know that they shouldn’t do that undesirable action again. Token economies are used as a system of rewards for the patients, in which desirable behavior is reinforced and also rewarded.

Cognitive-Behavior therapy is the combination of both cognitive and behavior therapy. It combines the strategies and techniques used so that the therapist can help their patient. This type of therapy is used to treat a wide range of issues and conflicts afflicting people. Its goal is to change patterns of thinking and behavior behind people’s problems. This therapy focuses on setting goals for changing a person’s behavior and then placing and also changing the patient’s interpretation of his or her situation. The therapist might work with the patient by changing certain behaviors by monitoring current behaviors and thought patterns. Cognitive-behavior therapy works by changing people’s attitude and their behavior by focusing on the person’s beliefs and thoughts, and how those thoughts effect a person’s behavior. The therapist will usually customize the patient’s therapy based on their needs and what techniques or strategies work best for the patient.

Overall both cognitive therapy and behavior therapy use a number of strategies and techniques to helping people solve their issues. Although each therapy has different techniques the therapist will use the best strategies that will yield the best results and best fit the patient’s needs so that the patient can fix whatever is causing their issues. Even though both forms of therapies go about helping people in different ways, both strive to helping the patient lead a healthy and productive life.

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