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Adult Mental Health Teams

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Psychodynamic Psychotherapy

Psychological Therapies

**Introduction**

Psychological Therapies

Adult Mental Health Teams

Psychological Therapy is part of the Adult Mental Health Team specialist services and offer talking therapy assessment and treatment for people over the age of 18 years. This leaflet describes one of a range of approaches to therapy that we offer.

People seek therapy for many reasons — usually combinations of mood changes, especially anxiety and depression, physical symptoms associated with forms of stress, problems in making and maintaining relationships and doubts about ourselves.

The difficulties outlined above can be associated with the ways we learned to live our lives, negotiate relationships and manage ourselves during our early years. They may also be associated with recent illness or events in our lives which change how we see our situation. The varying psychological approaches address this from different perspectives and therefore each therapeutic treatment differs in its approach.

**What is Psychodynamic Psychotherapy?**

Psychotherapy is a talking therapy which helps people identify, explore and work through their difficulties. ‘Psychodynamic’ refers to an approach that looks systematically at the psychological influences behind our behaviours, feelings and emotions, and how these might relate to earlier life experiences.

‘Psychotherapy’ involves talking with a trained therapist to treat emotional problems and mental health conditions by becoming more aware, gaining control and making choices that work better for us.

Psychodynamic psychotherapy sees problems as a result of the link between the present and past. It aims to help you understand intense, unmanageable feelings that you may not even be aware of by gaining an understanding of the underlying cause.

Early childhood experiences are explored to see how these have influenced your development. Even though such experiences may be unconscious, they can continue to have a powerful influence over thoughts, feelings and behaviour. For example, if you suffered serious loss in your childhood this might make you especially sensitive to further experiences of loss. If you were hurt as a child, you may have hidden your anger about this but it may emerge as depression or as aggression towards yourself or others in later years.

It is important to recognise and make sense of these patterns of behaviour in order to improve how you see yourself and how you relate to others.

**Why might I need psychodynamic psychotherapy?**

You may have been coping for some time with chronic depression, anxiety, relationship issues, low self-esteem, harmful behaviour towards yourself or others, or complex psychological problems.

You may have experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse which has affected how you relate to yourself and others. Your emotions might be overwhelming, or making you think about ending your life.

Psychotherapy can be helpful if you want to work on understanding the underlying reasons for your problems and to change how you manage your difficulties. It is not a short cut to solving problems and requires hard work, commitment and a preparedness to face uncomfortable awareness about yourself.

**How do I know psychotherapy is right for me?**

This will be assessed by an experienced therapist. Sometimes more than one appointment is needed in order to get a full picture of your needs. It is helpful if you can be as honest as possible when describing what is troubling you. Your

individual situation is carefully considered before a decision about your treatment is made. Together, we will consider alternatives if psychotherapy is not the best way forward.

**What can I expect when I’m in therapy?**

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Treatment is generally time-limited, conducted over a period of a year or more, and unlike some other therapies it is not usually structured or led by an agenda. Sessions are weekly and last for 50 minutes. For the process to work it is important that you are able and willing to maintain this commitment. You will be expected to avoid actions such as using drugs or drinking too much alcohol.

During treatment you will be encouraged to be open and honest about whatever is on your mind. You and your therapist might find that, unconsciously, you avoid talking about issues which need to be addressed in order for you to develop a better and more compassionate understanding of yourself and your relationships.

In therapy, you will consider how you may unintentionally be contributing to your ongoing difficulties. As part of this process, you may be encouraged to look at how you relate to your therapist as this may have links to other relationships.

You and your therapist will work closely together to focus on what you might find painful or shameful subjects in order to explore and discover what you genuinely think and feel.

The therapist will help you to identify emotions and thoughts which are out of reach and unconscious through thinking about the effects of the environment in which you grew up, your childhood and adolescent experiences.

Patterns of conflict and blocks to personal growth or unresolved difficulties that may cause you distress will be investigated.

Therapists in this model may say less than in other types of therapy, but will offer interpretations or critical insights that you may have overlooked.

A planned ending is a key part of the process and it is important to remember that many people find they see the benefits of treatment some weeks or months after it finishes.

**What if I think the therapy is not working?**

It is common during therapy to feel stuck or hopeless about progress. This is a normal part of the work, as all sorts of feelings and thoughts are stirred up. Experiencing strong and painful feelings is a central part of psychotherapy. It will feel difficult at times, when looking truthfully at yourself and your relationships is bound to be uncomfortable.

We will encourage you to stay with these feelings and share them openly with your therapist. They are often an important and necessary part of making progress, though they can mean you feel worse before you begin to feel better.

**Patient Feedback**

“Tim stott is a fantastic therapist and \_ an extremely skilled and empathetic practitioner. Despite the challenges of \_ the group online during the pandemic, the service continue under Tim’s stewardship.”