

COGNITIVE APPROACHES TO PSYCHOTHERAPY

From Patterson & Watkins: *Theories of Psychotherapy* (pp. 193-194) Part Three

Chapter 7 Rational-Emotive Psychotherapy: Ellis

Chapter 8 Cognitive Therapy: Beck

Chapter 9 Cognitive-Behavior Modification: Meichenbaum

Cognitive approaches to psychotherapy are those that tend to emphasize more of a *logical, intellectual approach* to the process and/or the solution of the client's problems or difficulties. These approaches can be relatively eclectic; that is, a variety of techniques can be accepted or adopted. This may be predicated on the belief that different problems and different clients require different methods or techniques; the choice of techniques usually is made on the basis of empiricism or one's experience.

Some earlier editions of this book included the so-called Minnesota point of view of Williamson as a cognitive approach. The previous edition also included a chapter on Raimy and his cognitive misconception hypothesis. Individuals interested in those theories should consult previous editions.

Ellis was the first to develop a rational psychotherapy. More than a decade passed before others, such as Beck and Meichenbaum, developed their cognitive therapies. The approaches of Ellis, Beck, and Meichenbaum are each described in the chapters of this section. These approaches share a number of similarities, as the reader will recognize. They present the therapist largely as a teacher who attempts to get the client to apply information, logic, or reasoning to correct the faulty interpretations and inferences and the irrational thinking that are assumed to be the bases of emotional disorders.

The nature of American culture would appear to be conducive to a cognitive approach to psychotherapy because of its emphasis on science. Frank (1961) pointed this out and in doing so also indicates a possible weakness of this approach to psychotherapy. The scientific ideal, he said: "values objectivity and intellectual comprehension, and these features may not be entirely advantageous for psychotherapy. They tend to result in an overevaluation of cognitive aspects. From the patient's standpoint "insight" in the sense of ability to verbalize self-understanding may be mistaken for genuine attitude change. From the therapist's standpoint, the scientific attitude may lead to undue stress on the niceties of interpretation and avoidance of frankly emotion-arousing techniqueseven though there is universal agreement that in order to succeed, psychotherapy must involve the patient's emotions." (pp. 219-220)

REFERENCE

Frank, J. D. (1961). *Persuasion and healing*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.