

DYNAMIC PSYCHOTHERAPY

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How does Dynamic Psychotherapy work?

‘Within an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance, the therapist establishes a relationship with the patient, the aim of which - usually unspoken - is to enable the patient to understand his true feelings and to bring them to the surface and experience them. For this purpose, the therapist uses theoretical knowledge, guided wherever possible by his own self-knowledge, to identify himself with the patient; and puts his understanding to the patient in the form of *interpretations*, which constitute his main therapeutic tool.’

(David Malan, Individual Psychotherapy and the Science of Psychodynamics second edition 2001)

Theory of Psychotherapy Action

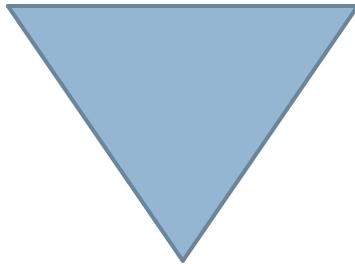
- Basic theories of therapeutic action for psychodynamic psychotherapy include:
 - ⦿ Making the unconscious conscious
 - ⦿ Supporting weakened ego function
 - ⦿ Reactivating development

Making the Unconscious Conscious

THE TWO TRIANGLES

Defence

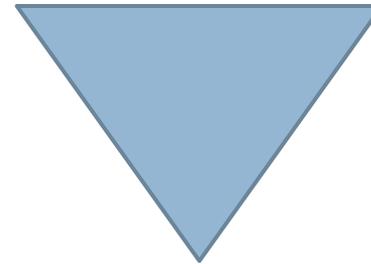
Anxiety



Hidden Feeling
(often an impulse)

Other (O)
(usually current,
or recent past)

Transference (T)
(usually here-and-now)



Parent (P)
(usually distant past)

Supporting Ego Functions

- the ego manages the person's inner mental life and relationship to the world
- In order to do this, the ego relies on many essential functions, such as impulse control, internal and external stimulus regulation, the capacity for tolerating anxiety and strong feelings, and mobilization of defense mechanisms
- Psychodynamic psychotherapy can help patients by supporting weakened ego function
- Patients derive temporary benefit by “borrowing” ego function from their therapists during times of ego weakness; they can also internalize new ways of thinking and behaving in order to strengthen ego function on a more permanent basis

Reactivating Development

- Mental and emotional development can be arrested or stunted, rendering people unable to move forward as adults, having problems, such as maladaptive coping mechanisms, impaired relationships with other people, and problems in maintaining self-esteem
- The reason for the developmental problem is usually something very painful, such as abuse, neglect, emotional deprivation, lack of parental attunement, or over-stimulation
- In the psychodynamic frame of reference, when these early experiences are put out of awareness, diverse developmental problems arise
- Psychodynamic psychotherapy helps to reactivate development in the context of the new relationship with the therapist