

# Psychological therapy a comparison of traditional and postmodern perspectives ess...

[Psychology](#), [Behaviorism](#)



This paper reviews the different approaches that may be used in counseling the hypothetical client Stan. The first part of the research paper introduces the different aspects involved in counseling. The second part reviews cognitive behavioral approach to therapy and will explain the basic principles and assumptions about the same. This section will also explain the strengths and weaknesses that accompany cognitive approach to therapy. The third part of the paper reviews solution focused therapy approach providing a review of assumptions, basic principles, strengths and weaknesses. The final a part explains why the application of cognitive behavioral approach may be preferred over solution focused approach.

## **Introduction**

Counseling and therapy has been employed in several aspects in trying to understand discordant character in humans. One of the problems that counseling seeks to correct is pervasive or psychological disorders. The difficulty that counselors face is the manner with which to approach the patient and thus walk the patient past their fears or misconstrued perceptions. Some counselors may seek to approach the problem from the root course of discordant thought or behavior. In this method, the therapist will try and understand the problem that patient suffers and there by walk back from the misconstrued perceptions or assessment to a more plausible state. This method requires that the therapist evaluate the problem first before acting on the patient to change character. This kind of approach is the Cognitive Behavioral Perspective or Approach, where a thorough analysis of the cause of the disorder is first established. On the other hand, newer methods suggest that the process of walking the patient back from the

disorder to a new realization is both time consuming and may not yield the desired solution. These postmodern methods appreciate that disorders occur due to a myriad of discordant thoughts and different levels of assumptions and misconstrued conclusion. Thus a new method directs that the therapist works on solutions that would best solve the problem the patient suffers. Here total focus is on the possible solutions that would get the patient out of discordant thought and character. This new method of approaching the counseling process of a patient is referred to as Solution Focused Therapy. This paper reviews these two approaches in counseling the hypothetical client Stan. The paper will provide a theoretical approach of each method along with the application of each approach. The paper will also provide the strengths and weaknesses of applying each method. The paper will finally preview the best method approach with the possibility of reviewing the use both methods in conjunction.

## **Cognitive Behavioral therapy**

This is an approach developed largely by Aaron Beck to treating discordant character or mental disorders that is centered on solving the common problem . Cognitive therapy is an approach that views all problems to be misconception or misconstrued process that may emanate for faulty thinking or inference. This fault in thinking or misconception may be as a result of wrong information or incoherent interpretation of information. It may also be as a result of failure by the client to distinguish between reality and fantasy. Hanna (2007, p. 122) illustrates that “ cognitive therapy may generally be said to include two basic steps that is, recognizing and appreciating the

existence the misconception that persists in the client.” The second step is where the therapist attempts to correct or reverse the maladaptive belief that the client has taken up.

In theory, the concept of cognitive therapy is based on the theoretical foundation that human character and expression is based on perception and the construction of any familiarity that a human come across. Thus in counseling Stan with the cognitive approach, there are basic assumptions that have to be made in order to make the approach meaningful. The first assumption is that an individual’s internal communication can be accessed and secondly, that the personal beliefs of a client have a significant personal meaning. Here, it implies that whatever Stan believes, there is a significant meaning to it. The final and perhaps the most defining component of cognitive therapy is the assumption that the “ meanings of such believes can only be discovered by the client instead of the therapist providing an interpretation of such believes” .

In general therefore, the foundation behind cognitive therapy can state that in order to fully appreciate an emotional expression or disturbance, it is paramount that one focuses on the cognitive processes that have led to the experience. Corey (2009, p. 287) asserts that “ cognitive approach appreciates the fact that the mind and perception is the root of character.” In this respect, the aim of the approach is to have Stan change the way he perceives his thought in order to reach the root cause of the disturbing emotional episodes. The therapist is here required to present a sought of logic that the client can relate to and thereby understand that his reaction to the circumstance is not warranted.

## **Principles of cognitive therapy**

The principle of cognitive is based on the theoretical foundation that there is a misconception or misconstrued perception in the side of Stan that causes him to exhibit undesirable character. Thus some of the misconception that persists makes up the basic principles of cognitive therapy approach.

The first misconception that will be reviewed is selective abstraction. As the name suggests, this is where a client such as Stan, chooses to form a conclusion based on a solitary and isolated detail of an entire event. This is where the client, instead of reviewing the incident as whole, chooses to pick only a small portion of the event and draws conclusion from it. In this regard, Stan misses the meaning of the whole construct having a perception based on a misconstrued assertion. In application, the client may be found to dwell on the accessions of weaknesses or failures of occasions however minute those occasions may be .

The second principle that may define cognitive approach is overgeneralization. This is the process where a client strongly holds a belief from a single event and applies the same belief in other unrelated events . Here, the client inappropriately generalizes all events to a single conclusion that was generated in another incidence. For instance, a client may have difficulty with working with a particular age groups such as adolescents, thus the conclusion is that working with any adolescent is extremely difficult. Stan for instance may have witnessed a terrible event while walking along a pathway and conclude that had he avoided the pathway the incident may never have taken place. This overgeneralization may lead to the client not

walking outside anymore due unfounded past fears. The same may be used to explain dichotomous thinking, where a client thinks in only two extremes.

### **Strengths of using cognitive behavioral approach**

Cognitive therapy has been lauded to be one of the most preferred methods of treating patients of different conditions. This is due to the basic reason that a “cognitive therapist teaches a client on how to deal with perception of distorted thinking and thereby the client can walk back to a state of normalcy”. Through such logical processing of events and drawing logical conclusions, the client gets to understand that perceptions have a huge impact on behavior. Thus more realistic thinking can be applied by the client in other facets of thought and not just one the occasion that caused discomfort.

The strengths of using cognitive therapy approach can be demonstrated by number of cases where the approach has been successfully applied. Two main areas have been the main focus for the application of cognitive therapy, these are, depression and anxiety disorder. Strong empirical theoretical framework has allowed cognitive approach to be documented in solving several cases of anxiety disorder. Clinical use of cognitive approach have been applied in suicidal behavior, panic disorders, personality disorders, schizophrenic disorders, phobias, posttraumatic stress disorder and many other forms of clinical disorders.

### **Weaknesses of applying Cognitive Therapy approach**

One of the major problems that have been associated with cognitive therapy is that it does not seek to solve the problem that the client has. Instead, “

the approach requires that client relives through the horrors of emotional disturbance and let the patient walk through” . Thus this approach takes the patient through some hard times that would otherwise be avoided. Secondly, the method is extremely long and time consuming. The time taken to have the client understand the said misconception and then walk back to normal perception is a long and tedious process for both the therapist and the client.

### **Solution Focused Perspective**

There are more postmodern approaches to counseling Stan that tries to shift from the common traditional methods. The solution focused perspective is an approach in therapy where the focused shifts from problem solving to the solutions. This concept tries to shift away from the past and gives priority to the present and the future. Thus, a therapist is expected to concentrate on what is possible in order to get Stan out of the current state of emotional or psychological distress without any interest in what is causing the problem. Corey (2009, p. 288) argues that “ there is no direct relationship between understanding a problem and attempting to solve the same”. In a sense these scholar considers that exploring solution to a problem is a much quicker way of getting to the client and surpassing the need to take the client through the horrors of emotional disturbances. Hence, the therapist presents an assortment of solutions to the client and the client is to identify the best or plausible solution with less concern directed at diagnosis or historical events.

## **Principles of solution focused therapy**

This kind of therapy is based on the basic principle that human beings, through positive orientation, generally prefer healthier lives and would rather explore all available solutions towards such a realization. Sue (2008, p. 160) argues that for “Stan to seek therapy, there is an underlying need for Stan to find solution to his problem and therefore, solution focused therapy may find a much quicker solution if it concentrates on the same.” For this reason, a therapist would best to explore the solution by building it around the hopes and optimism of the client. However, just like cognitive approach to therapy, there are basic assumptions at that guide the solution focused perspective.

## **Assumptions of solution focused therapy**

One of the basic assumptions that solution focused therapy is based on is the idea that since Stan has come for therapy, then there is higher chance that Stan would want to work effectively. Thus in order to explore the effective approach that most people prefer, a therapist need to directly provide solutions that may lead to an effective therapy .

The second assumption that solution focused is based is that clients always present only one side of the problem to the therapist. Therefore solution focused therapy provides the client with the opportunity to explore the other side of his personality. This then allows the client to consider other possible modes of life.

## **Therapeutic process**

The solution focused approach is said to have four basic steps. The first step requires that the therapist identifies what the client wants. Secondly, the



therapist is expected to identify what the client has been doing and is already working. Here, the therapist is not expected to deduce the clients' problem, instead encourage the client to continue of the path that the client has taken has registered good progress. Thirdly, if whatever the client is doing is not working, then the therapist has to present other possible solutions. Finally, the therapist is expected to keep the session as brief as possible.

### **Advantages of solution Focused**

The greatest advantage that solution focused is the time saving approach that is inherent in the process. The therapy is based on solutions and thus avoids the long sessions of getting to understand the problem.

### **Weaknesses**

The greatest weakness that solution focused therapy is inherent in the basic fact that the cause of the problem has not been addresses. Emotional distress and other sorts of psychological distress is a result some misconception. Without addressing the misconception, possibilities of slipping back are increased.

### **The Most Effective Approach**

Based on the above discussion, it is plausible to argue that the most effective approach that can be used in counseling Stan is cognitive behavioral perspective. This is due to the basic reason that cognitive perspective attempts to adjust the misconception that causes the psychological problem and thereby tailor the solution to the specific client. In

a sense, it follows that normal process of diagnosis then prescription. Unlike the solution based process, that seeks to prescribe to the patient without identifying the cause of the problem.

## **Conclusion**

Counseling Stan may take several approaches. Each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses. While this paper has provided an analysis of two methods and provided one of the methods to be the most effective, there are other circumstances that solution focused approach may work for the client. A therapist has the responsibility of identifying the best approach depending on the condition of the client.

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