

Behavior Therapy: Ordinary People

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Behavior Therapy is a directive form of therapy that focuses on the client's observable behavior. There is less weight placed on attempting to understand the origins of a psychological problem, and the theory relies on the idea that change can come with a change in behavior.

Behaviorists believe target behaviors can be modified by various techniques, such as "operant conditioning techniques, relaxation training, systematic desensitization, exposure therapies, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, social skills training, self-management programs, multimodal therapy, and mindfulness and acceptance-based approaches". (Corey, 2015)

At the onset of therapy, client and therapist must build a collaborative relationship and agree on goals towards a positive change, which involve the client's active participation in behavior modification. The therapist will make an assessment with the ABC method: (A) Antecedent events, or what precedes certain behaviors, (B) Behavior, and (C) Consequences of the behavior. The therapist will act as a problem solver and employ evidence based techniques to particular problems.

If I were employing Behavior therapy with Conrad, I would first create a warm, supportive environment, and establish what our goals are with therapy. I would establish the collaborative nature of our therapy, and that our progress would depend on his participation in and out of the therapy sessions. I would then assess what areas of his life are feeling problematic for him, and his behaviors associated with those areas. Together we would address Conrad's thoughts and feelings involving his brother's death, and his fear of rejection by his mother especially to discuss the events around his brother's death, including his own suicide attempt.

To address the fear of rejection by his mother, I would employ the technique of systematic desensitization, which is a form of exposure therapy, with a three step process. First step would be to teach Conrad progressive muscular relaxation techniques. The second step would be to create his anxiety hierarchy, and finally the desensitization process where he learns

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to relax himself progressively up the imaginal hierarchy, including imagining himself conversing with his mother about his brother's death.

I believe Conrad would additionally benefit from Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, as well as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. These techniques would help him develop self-compassion, which would help him accept his suffering while not judging himself. He would learn to accept his thoughts and feelings, especially the guilt regarding his brother's death, without identifying with them, and in the process, let go of the past and embrace the here and now experiences of his life.

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References

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