

There are four theoretical foundations of behavior therapy: classical conditioning, operant conditioning, social learning and cognitive trend and we're going to take a deep dive into the aspects of each.

Classical conditioning is also known as respondent conditioning. This foundation refers to what happens prior to learning that creates a response through pairing. I think the textbook's example is perfect so I'll use it as well. The textbook used an example of a dog sayings: if everytime you place food in front of a dog, a bell also rings, eventually every time a bell rings, the dog will salivate thinking he's going to eat too. This is a perfect example of classical conditioning. Classical conditioning also shows that a person can become afraid of something merely by seeing it. If every time a person sees a snake on television, the snake is attacking someone then that person will always associate snakes with attacks. Therefore, they'll be fearful of snakes even without having personally encountered one.

Operant conditioning is a type of learning in when behaviors are influenced mainly by the consequences that follow them. For example, if a person touches a stove and gets burned, they learn then not to touch the stove because it leads to being burned. If environmental changes produce behavior that is reinforcement, then it's more likely that behavior will be repeated. But if not, the likelihood of that behavior being repeated is lessened. This is also a form of reward and punishment and even understanding right from wrong.

The social learning approach is interactional, interdisciplinary, and multimodel. A lot of big words but it can be broken down into two thoughts. One, people are capable of self direct change and they themselves are the agent of change. Two, people can see and observe something and work to change in that manner based on that example.

Lastly, cognitive behavior therapy says that what people believe influences how people act and feel. It has much in common with contemporary behavior therapy in that the mechanism of change in both is cognitive which is when one modifies their thoughts to alter their behavior. I think the cognitive approach can even be seen in religion or in politics. Religious people act based on what they believe. A prime example would be women believing they need to wear “women's clothing” and only ever wear skirts or dresses.

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