

Role of Psychotherapy in Pandemic Situation

Dr. Shaifali Agarwal

Assistant Professor

Department of Psychology

G.D.H.G College, Moradabad

Email: akshat02agarwal@gmail.com

Abstract

In the wake of pandemic situations, the population of our country experiences various kinds of physical, mental, social stress. Person of every stage faces particular stress of one type or the other. Stressors associated with a pandemic, including self-quarantine, social distancing, job loss, and the threat of illness, persists. These factors can be expected to have a significant impact on the human psyche and contribute to a secondary mental health epidemic. Various psychotherapy techniques can be used to overcome this situation of stress. Yoga and meditation also play a great role in managing stress.

Keywords: *pandemic, psychotherapy, yoga, meditation*

Reference to this paper
should be made as
follows:

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Psychotherapy in
Pandemic Situation*

Journal Global Values,
Vol. XII, No.I
Article No.01,
pp. 001-007

[https://anubooks.com/
jgv-vol-xi-no-1-jan-
june-2021/](https://anubooks.com/jgv-vol-xi-no-1-jan-june-2021/)

[https://doi.org/
10.31995/
jgv.2021.v12i01.001](https://doi.org/10.31995/jgv.2021.v12i01.001)

Introduction

Various psychotherapy techniques for handling stress

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy-

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is a short-term form of behavioral treatment. It helps people problem-solve. CBT also reveals the relationship between beliefs, thoughts, and feelings, and the behaviors that follow. Through CBT, people learn that their perceptions directly influence how they respond to specific situations. In other words, a person's thought process informs their behaviors and actions.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy is not a distinct treatment technique. Instead, it is a general term that refers to a group of therapies. These therapies have certain similarities in therapeutic methodology. The group includes rational emotive behavior therapy, cognitive therapy, and dialectical behavior therapy. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is grounded in the belief that how a person perceives events determines how they will act. It is not the events themselves that determine the person's actions or feelings. For example, a person with anxiety may believe that "everything will turn out badly today." These negative thoughts may influence their focus. They may then only perceive negative things that happen. Meanwhile, they may block out or avoid thoughts or actions that could disprove the negative belief system. Afterward, when nothing appears to go right in the day, the person may feel even more anxious than before. The negative belief system may get stronger. The person is at risk of being trapped in a vicious, continuous cycle of anxiety.

Cognitive-behavioral therapists believe we can adjust our thoughts. This is thought to directly influence our emotions and behavior. The adjustment process is called cognitive restructuring. Aaron T. Beck is the psychiatrist widely considered to be the father of cognitive therapy. He believed a person's thinking pattern may become established in childhood. He found that certain cognitive errors could lead to depressogenic or dysfunctional assumptions.

Common cognitive errors and their associated dysfunctional assumptions include:

- Self-references: "People always focus attention on me, especially when I fail."
- Selective abstraction: "Only my failures matter. I am measured by my failures."
- Overgeneralizing: "If something is true in one setting, it is true in every setting."

- Excessive responsibility: “I am responsible for every failure and every bad thing that happens.”
- Dichotomous thinking: Viewing the world in extremes, black or white, with nothing in between.

The cognitive-behavioral process is based on an educational model. People in therapy are helped to unlearn negative reactions and learn new ones. These are positive reactions to challenging situations. CBT helps break down overwhelming problems into small, manageable parts. Therapists help people set and reach short-term goals. Then the therapist gradually adjusts how the person in treatment thinks, feels, and reacts in tough situations. Changing attitudes and behaviors can help people learn to address specific issues in productive ways.

Directional Behavioural Therapy

Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) is a comprehensive cognitive-behavioral treatment. It aims to treat people who see little or no improvement with other therapy models. This treatment focuses on problem-solving and acceptance-based strategies. It operates within a framework of dialectical methods. The term dialectical refers to the processes that bring opposite concepts together such as change and acceptance.

Certified practitioners of DBT offer acceptance and support to people in therapy. Many of the people they work with have conditions described as “difficult to treat.” They work to develop techniques for achieving goals, improving well-being, and effecting lasting positive change.

Currently, DBT is used to treat people with chronic or severe mental health issues. Issues DBT treats include self-harm, eating and food issues, addiction, and posttraumatic stress, as well as borderline personality. DBT was originally designed to treat people who had chronic suicidal thoughts as a symptom of borderline personality.

DBT can be used in a variety of mental health settings. It incorporates the following five components

1. Capability enhancement. DBT provides opportunities for the development of existing skills. In treatment, four basic skill sets are taught. These are emotion regulation, mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance.
2. Generalization. DBT therapists use various techniques to encourage the transfer of learned skills across all settings. People in therapy may learn to apply what they have learned at home, at school, at work, and in the

community. For example, a therapist might ask the person in treatment to talk with a partner about a conflict. The person may use emotion regulation skills before and after the discussion.

3. **Motivational enhancement.** DBT uses individualized behavioral treatment plans to reduce problematic behaviors that might negatively affect the quality of life. For example, therapists might use self-monitoring tracking sheets so sessions can be adapted to address the most severe issues first.
4. **Capability and motivational enhancement of therapists.** Because DBT is often provided to people who experience chronic, severe, and intense mental health issues, therapists receive a great deal of supervision and support to prevent things like vicarious traumatization or burnout. For example, treatment-team meetings are held frequently to give therapists a space to provide and receive support, training, and clinical guidance.
5. **Structuring of the environment.** A goal of therapy is often to ensure positive, adaptive behaviors are reinforced across all environmental settings. For example, if someone participates in multiple treatment programs within one agency, the therapist might make sure each program was set up to reinforce all the positive skills and behaviors learned.

The standard form of DBT consists of individual therapy, skills training group, phone coaching, and a therapist consultation team. Those in standard DBT attend therapy and a skills training group weekly. The groups are designed to help those in treatment develop behavioral skills through group work and homework assignments. These assignments allow people to practice learned skills in day-to-day life. Phone coaching is also an important part of DBT. It helps people in treatment reach out to their therapist for support when a challenging situation comes up between sessions.

The issues faced by many who participate in DBT can be complex and severe. Due to this, a consultation team is considered essential for DBT providers. The team is made up of group leaders and individual therapists. It can offer support, motivation, and therapy to the therapists working with difficult issues.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a type of psychotherapy that helps you accept the difficulties that come with life. ACT has been around for a long time but seems to be gaining media attention lately. Categorically speaking, ACT is a form of mindfulness-based therapy, theorizing that greater well-being can be attained

by overcoming negative thoughts and feelings. Essentially, ACT looks at your character traits and behaviors to assist you in reducing avoidant coping styles. ACT also addresses your commitment to making changes, and what to do about it when you can't stick to your goals.

ACT focuses on 3 areas

- 1) Accept your reactions and be present
- 2) Choose a valued direction
- 3) Take action.

Whether it be a situation you cannot control, a personality trait that is hard to change or an emotion that overwhelms, accepting it can allow you to move forward. Obsessing, worrying and playing things over and over keep you stuck. In this sense, asking *why* can leave you helpless. ACT invites you to accept reality and work with what you have.

Some acceptance strategies include

1. Letting feelings or thoughts happen without the impulse to act on them.
2. Observe your weaknesses but take note of your strengths.
3. permit yourself to not be good at everything.
4. Acknowledge the difficulty in your life without escaping from it or avoiding it.
5. Realize that you can be in control of how you react, think and feel.

Defusion

Another aspect of ACT is the skill-set of learning how to cognitively defuse psychologically heightened experiences. Defusion involves realizing thoughts and feelings *for what they are*, like passing sensations or irrational things that we tell ourselves - instead of *what we think they are* like feelings that will never end or factual truths. The goal of defusion is *not* to help you avoid the experience, but to make it more manageable for you.

Some defusion strategies include

1. Observe what you are feeling. What are the physical sensations?
2. Notice the way you are talking to yourself as these feelings are experienced.
3. What interpretations are you making about your experience? Are they based in reality?
4. Grab onto the strands of your negative self-talk and counter them with realistic ones.
5. Now re-evaluate your experience with your newfound outlook.

Meditation

When you meditate, you may clear away the information overload that builds up every day and contributes to your stress.

The emotional benefits of meditation can include

- Gaining a new perspective on stressful situations
- Building skills to manage your stress
- Increasing self-awareness
- Focusing on the present
- Reducing negative emotions
- Increasing imagination and creativity
- Increasing patience and tolerance

Elements of meditation

Different types of meditation may include different features to help you meditate. These may vary depending on whose guidance you follow or who's teaching a class. Some of the most common features in meditation include:

- Focused attention. Focusing your attention is generally one of the most important elements of meditation.
Focusing your attention is what helps free your mind from the many distractions that cause stress and worry. You can focus your attention on such things as a specific object, an image, a mantra, or even your breathing.
- Relaxed breathing. This technique involves deep, even-paced breathing using the diaphragm muscle to expand your lungs. The purpose is to slow your breathing, take in more oxygen, and reduce the use of shoulder, neck and upper chest muscles while breathing so that you breathe more efficiently.
- A quiet setting. If you're a beginner, practicing meditation may be easier if you're in a quiet spot with few distractions, including no television, radios, or cellphones. As you get more skilled at meditation, you may be able to do it anywhere, especially in high-stress situations where you benefit the most from meditation, such as a traffic jam, a stressful work meeting, or a long line at the grocery store.
- A comfortable position. You can practice meditation whether you're sitting, lying down, walking, or in other positions or activities. Just try to be comfortable so that you can get the most out of your meditation. Aim to keep good posture during meditation.
- Open attitude. Let thoughts pass through your mind without judgment.

Conclusion

In the time of pandemics, a person faces certain types of stress like psychological, mental and financial stresses. Psychotherapies of various types can be beneficial for maintaining stress and yoga and meditation also play a big role in maintaining stress.

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