

AP Psychology: Treatment of Psychological Disorders Notes

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AP Psychology Treatment of Psychological Disorders Notes: Key Takeaways

Review some key concepts about the treatment of psychological disorders you should know for the AP Psychology exam.

- Psychodynamic, humanistic, behavioral, and cognitive psychologists share a belief in the power of psychotherapy to treat mental disorders. On the other hand, psychologists who subscribe to a biomedical model assert that such problems require somatic treatments such as drugs. Psychotherapies, except for behavioral treatments, largely consist of talking to a psychologist. Behaviorists, as you know, believe that psychological problems result from the contingencies of reinforcement to which a person has been exposed. Therefore, behavioral therapy focuses on changing these contingencies.
- Psychologists with a biomedical orientation generally refer to the people who come to them for help as “patients.” Other therapists, humanistic therapists in particular, prefer the term “clients.”
- Regardless of their training, clinicians are guided by principles established by the APA. These guidelines emphasize the importance of respecting people’s rights and dignity, acting with fidelity, integrity, cultural humility, and nonmaleficence (the medical obligation not to harm).

AP Psychology Treatment of Psychological Disorders Notes: Key Terms

Review the following key terms related to the treatment of psychological disorders for the AP exam.

- **Hypnosis:** Hypnosis is an altered state of consciousness. When in this state, traditional psychoanalysts believe that people are less likely to repress troubling thoughts and can

even recover childhood memories about early trauma. However, research has supported only the ability of hypnosis to aid in pain control and decrease anxiety.

- **Person-centered therapy:** One of the best-known humanistic therapists is Carl Rogers. Rogers created person-centered therapy, also known as client-centered therapy. This therapeutic method hinges on the therapist providing the client with what Rogers termed unconditional positive regard.
- **Unconditional positive regard:** Blanket acceptance and support of a person regardless of what the person says or does. Rogers believed that unconditional positive regard is essential to healthy development. People who have not experienced it may come to see themselves in the negative ways that others have made them feel. By providing unconditional positive regard, humanistic therapists seek to help their clients accept and take responsibility for themselves.
- **Applied behavior analysis:** One behavioral approach, most used to help people with developmental disorders like autism spectrum disorder, is known as applied behavior analysis (ABA). Therapists trained in ABA set up systems of reinforcement to help teach their clients how to be successful in the world.
- **Aversive therapy:** Another way that classical conditioning techniques can be used to treat people is called aversive therapy. This process involves pairing a habit a person wishes to break, such as smoking or bed-wetting, with an unpleasant stimulus such as electric shock or nausea.
- **Cognitive therapy:** As cognitive therapists locate the cause of psychological problems in the way people think, their methods of therapy concentrate on changing these unhealthy thought patterns. The goal of cognitive therapy is often referred to as cognitive restructuring, which involves challenging people's patterns of maladaptive thinking. Cognitive therapy is often quite combative as therapists challenge the irrational thinking patterns of their clients.
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy:** One popular group of therapies combines the ideas and techniques of both cognitive and behavioral psychologists. This approach to therapy is known as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).
- **Psychoactive medications:** Psychoactive medications, or psychotropic medications, treat many kinds of psychological problems, ranging from anxiety disorders to mood disorders to schizophrenia. The more severe a disorder, the more likely that drugs will be used to treat it. Schizophrenia, for example, is almost always treated with drugs.
- **Antipsychotic medications:** Schizophrenia is generally treated with antipsychotic medications such as Thorazine or Haldol. These drugs generally function by blocking the

receptor sites for dopamine. Their effectiveness therefore provides support for the dopamine hypothesis.

- **Antidepressants:** Mood disorders often respond well to chemotherapy. The three most common kinds of drugs used to treat unipolar depression are tricyclic antidepressants, monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitors, and serotonin selective reuptake inhibitor drugs or SSRIs (most notably Prozac). All tend to increase the activity of serotonin, although tricyclics and MAO inhibitors seem to have wider effects.
- **Antianxiety drugs:** Anxiety disorders are also often treated with antianxiety drugs. Essentially, these drugs act by depressing the activity of the central nervous system, thus making people feel more relaxed. Two main types of antianxiety drugs are barbiturates, such as Miltown, and benzodiazepines, including Xanax and Valium.
- **Biofeedback:** A type of therapy most commonly used in the treatment of anxiety and depression. During biofeedback, a patient is taught to recognize and then control various physiological responses such as breathing, heart rate, or even brain activity (neurofeedback) without medication.