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Adult Department
April 2004



For practical information about the Trust and maps on how to get there, please see the dark blue 'Patient Prospectus'.

What is psychotherapy?

Psychotherapy has come to be known as the 'talking cure'. There are many different kinds of psychotherapy, but in the Adult Department we offer psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

What is psychoanalytic psychotherapy?

Difficult and painful experiences in the past can affect the way we behave and interact in the present. This can happen even if the link between the past and the present may not seem obvious. You might also feel overwhelmed by a traumatic experience that has happened at some point in your life.


Psychotherapy provides a safe place to talk through your emotional distress and think about what might have caused it. Because problems are often complicated psychotherapy does not provide quick solutions. It is more a process of gradually coming to understand your feelings and how you think about yourself. You will need to be prepared to look at yourself in a different way. Clinicians do not give advice but through getting to know you, help you work out what may be changed.

What can it treat?

Psychotherapy can help a wide range of emotional and psychological problems that affect adults including: depression, relationship difficulties, eating disorders, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorders. In certain cases people suffering from severe mental illness may benefit too.

How will you know if I am suitable for this treatment?

To begin with we offer a consultation, which will take anything between 1-6 sessions. During these sessions you will be able to talk about why you have come to the Clinic and tell us about the problems facing you. By the end the clinician will be able to discuss what would be most helpful for you.



It is quite possible that a consultation is sufficient to give you a fresh understanding, which enables you to carry on with your life. It may also be that some form of regular treatment in the Clinic is what you need. For some people the Tavistock may not be the right place and we would discuss with you alternative treatments provided elsewhere.

Each consultation session usually takes between an hour and an hour and a half. Whether the clinician recommends you for treatment in the department or not, they will still be available to remain in contact with your case.

What can I expect of the clinician?

It is common to feel that the clinician says very little. They do talk, but a therapy session is not an everyday conversation. It is a private place where you can talk openly about yourself with an experienced person whose aim is to understand as much about you as they can. The clinician is concerned to know how it feels to you and how you relate to your problems and your life. This is what a clinician will talk about. Clinicians are also interested in what happens in a session itself as well as in your history. Sessions are not based on questions and answers, but talking freely. This is not always easy, but clinicians do realise this.

How can this help?

The aim of psychotherapy is to help a person to talk about emotions and thoughts that they may not have been able to express before. This can bring a sense of relief and help to understand the current situation. Also, knowing that you will be seeing a clinician on a regular basis can help relieve the sense of being on your own and so help you manage your life more easily.

Side effects?

Psychotherapy is a powerful experience. Becoming more aware of your emotions and experience can bring relief but can also feel upsetting. It is quite usual for people in psychotherapy to feel a lot of emotions towards the psychotherapist or the members of the group they are in. However you can expect the clinician to be understanding about this.



What are the treatments offered?

Individual therapy

Sessions of 50 minutes each, once a week, for 1 year. However, brief, intermediate or more intensive therapy may be offered, depending on circumstances.

Group therapy

Sessions of up to 90 minutes each with a group of up to 8 people. Sessions take place once a week, usually for 2-3 years

Couple therapy

Sessions of up to 60 minutes each for both partners together. Sessions are usually weekly for a fixed term of between 12-40 weeks, involving one therapist or sometimes two.

If I am offered treatment, how long will I have to wait for it?

There is at times a considerable wait; sometimes for as long as one year. However there is generally less of a waiting list for group therapy. While waiting there is always the opportunity to review your situation with the clinician you saw for your consultation.

Who are the clinicians?

The clinical staff in the Adult Department are psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, nurses, social workers and other professionals with backgrounds in mental health work. All clinicians have had either extensive training in psychoanalytic psychotherapy or are having further training under supervision in the Department. Usually the clinician who treats you is different from the clinician who assesses you.