

Therapeutic Contexts

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

Now that we've discussed some of the different theoretical approaches to psychotherapy, this lesson will discuss some of the therapeutic contexts or ways people interact within therapy.

The particular areas of focus include:

1. Individual Therapy
2. Group Therapy
 - a. Family Therapy
 - b. Couples Therapy
3. Other Group Therapy Contexts
 - a. Work/School Therapy
 - b. Support Groups
 - c. Large Group Awareness Training

1. Individual Therapy

Individual therapy is probably the most recognizable therapeutic context. This type of therapy is conducted in a one-on-one session between a client and a psychologist, psychiatrist, or other type of psychotherapist.

Individual therapy is one of the more widely used types of psychotherapy because it's a bit more private. People tend to feel more comfortable when they're talking to somebody one-on-one in a space where other people can't necessarily hear.

In an individual therapy setting, there are not only different theories used but different methods used as well. Some of these methods might seem a little bit more standard, such as a discussion or conversation between the professional and the client. However, there are other ways in which these two parties can interact.

➦ **EXAMPLE** They might use artistic therapy in which the client is asked to draw, sculpt, or show in some other visual way what he or she is feeling. Role playing is also an option in this type of therapeutic context.

Because there are many different types of theories and methods that can be applied to individual therapy, it's important for each client to find a therapist that suits that client specifically. In other words, a client should

choose a therapist that uses methods and theories that coincide with what the client believes and feels is best for him or herself.

2. Group Therapy

The next type of therapeutic context is **group therapy**, in which there's more than one person involved in the therapy session.

Most of the theories that we've discussed in relation to individual therapy can also be adapted to a group setting.

Some people tend to gravitate towards group therapy sessions because there's a bit more social support. In this type of setting, others can offer advice or possibly share experiences that are similar to those of others in the group, making people feel less alone.

A lot of times, group therapy sessions focus on working with relationships. This can also involve role playing techniques, in which people interact in different roles, and then switch with each other in order to better understand the other side's reaction.



TERM TO KNOW

Group Therapy

Therapy for several clients; particularly effective for clients who work on personal relationships or similar skills

2a. Family Therapy

One type of group therapy session that may be familiar to you is the type in which family is present, and all the family members participate in the session together.

The members can work individually, or they can meet with the therapist in a group, but the idea is to work on specific problems that the family might be having in terms of relationships and communication between the members.

The rationale behind **family therapy** is that what's a problem for one member of the family can be a problem for everybody. Thus, all the family members need to work as a unit in order to solve individual problems for the better of the whole.



TERM TO KNOW

Family Therapy

Therapy involving entire family--each has the opportunity to present their views. Family is viewed as a unit, not individuals.

2b. Couples Therapy

There is also a type of group therapy called couples therapy, which involves two people--a husband and wife, or two significant others--and the relationship between them.

Like family therapy, this therapeutic context is focused on improving the relationship and communication

between the parties.

Couples therapy sessions can help to reshape any distorted perceptions that each member of the couple might have of the other. These sessions also allow the parties to interact directly with one another, as opposed to discussing their problems individually to reach a more indirect resolution.

3. Other Group Therapy Contexts

In addition to family and couples therapy, there are some other types of group therapy contexts to take a look at.

3a. Work/School Therapy

Work or school therapy is designed to help people in a particular setting or context.

One way this occurs is through sensitivity training, which is meant to help raise people's self-awareness and sensitivity towards others. The goal is generally to make people aware of their own prejudices, particularly in regards to certain groups of people.

➦ **EXAMPLE** A particular workplace may have sexual discrimination sensitivity training, which is designed to help people recognize, avoid, and deal with issues of sexual discrimination or harassment within the workplace.

3b. Support Groups

There are also group settings that are specialized or geared towards a particular problem or group of people that are having that problem.

These are called self-help or support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Gamblers Anonymous, which are designed to provide support and a social network for people dealing with a particular issue.

A lot of times in these groups, people can help each other by sharing relevant information in regards to whatever the issue they're dealing with might be.

➦ **EXAMPLE** In Alcoholics Anonymous, members might talk about current research in addiction or alcohol abuse. They can also relate personal experiences they might have had when dealing with their own issues. This type of discussion can be really helpful for people who need that kind of added support or guidance.

These support groups can be professionally led, meaning they are led by a mental health professional, like a psychologist or a psychiatrist, who might not have any personal experience with the issue that the constituents in the group are dealing with.

These groups can also be peer led, meaning they are only run by the people within the group who are dealing with the particular issue.

3c. Large Group Awareness Training

There are other types of group therapy that have produced a bit more dubious results but might still fit under

the category of psychotherapy.

One of these is called large group awareness training, which involves a large group of people coming together, generally in a commercially designed program, with the goal of increasing self-awareness in order to facilitate personal change.

Instances of large group awareness training are the personal help or empowerment seminars that people attend in which they employ certain psychological techniques that are used in other types of therapy.

However, the actual psychological benefits of large group awareness training are a bit suspect, so it's important to take this particular group therapy context with a grain of salt when you're considering its efficacy as a form of psychotherapy.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned in addition to **individual therapy**, there are several other valid therapeutic contexts that can be used depending on the particular situation. One of these is **group therapy**, which typically involves clients working on relationships or similar skills. Two common forms of group therapy are **family therapy** and **couples therapy**.

There are **other group therapy contexts** as well, such as **work/school therapy**, **support groups**, and **large group awareness training**. However, it's important to remember that while large group awareness training might technically fall into the category of psychotherapy, it does not have the proven results and benefits of the other types.

Good luck!

Source: Adapted from Sophia tutorial by Erick Taggart.



TERMS TO KNOW

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Therapy involving entire family - each has opportunity to present their views. Family is viewed as a unit, not individuals.

Group Therapy

Therapy for several clients; particularly effective for clients who work on personal relationships or similar skills.