

AN EXPERIENCE WITH PSYCHOANALYTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY IN SINGAPORE

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Modern dynamic psychotherapy was introduced by Sigmund Freud. Freud's interest in psychotherapy began after he observed how Breuer used hypnosis to treat Anna O, a young woman who suffered from a number of hysterical visual and motor disturbances. Under hypnosis, Anna O related her problems and this relieved her symptoms. Freud and Breuer later applied hypnosis in the study and treatment of hysterical patients. Initially Freud used hypnosis as a suggestive treatment, but later he lay his patient on a couch and simply told him to say whatever that came into his mind. This is called "free association". He called this method of treatment "psychoanalysis". The purpose of hypnosis and psychoanalysis was to bring into consciousness memories and feelings that the patient had buried in his unconscious.

The psychoanalyst's role consists of actively listening to the patient's associations and identifying with the patient's feelings. One of the goals in psychoanalysis is to recover lost memories and integrate the lost memories into the total personality structure. In psychoanalysis, each session lasts about 40 to 60 minutes, and are held four or five times a week. The duration of a course of treatment lasts from one to a few years. As psychoanalysis is not a very practical method of

treatment, it has been replaced by less lengthy treatments called psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

Initially only the setting was changed e.g. the couch was replaced by the chair. Later, with the introduction of many schools of psychopathology, the theoretical basis of psychoanalysis was also changed.

Psychoanalytic psychotherapy has now come to refer to any form of intensive insight therapy, which in most schools, tends to deal with current conflicts and psychodynamics than the unconscious and past infantile memories. The aim of the therapist is to help the patient gain emotional and intellectual insight into his problems. Some therapists may emphasize on personality growth in the immature personality, and others may emphasize on improved interpersonal relationship. The duration and numbers of sessions varies from a few sessions as and when necessary to fixed numbers of say 8 to 24 or more sessions. The interval between sessions varies from daily to fortnightly or longer.

The effectiveness of psychotherapy does not appear to depend on the system of psychopathology on which the treatment is based, but on the personality of the therapist, his ability to develop a professional therapeutic relationship and rapport with the patient, his ability to communicate effectively with the patient, and his willingness to devote some time with the patient. This professional relationship distinguishes psychotherapy from other types of medical treatment. Another important factor is patient's faith in his therapist and his belief in the treatment. A knowledge of dynamic psychopathology is also necessary in equipping the therapist in the understanding of his patient.

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