



Behaviour Therapy

What is Behaviour Therapy?

Behaviour Therapy is a therapeutic approach to managing client difficulties by encouraging changes in behaviour. The emphasis is on what the client *does*, as opposed to what he or she *feels* or *thinks*.

To elicit the required change, therapists reinforce the wanted behaviour and discourage unwanted behaviour. This often involves the use of 'rewards' and 'punishments,' worked out with the client.

By receiving rewards for desired behaviour and punishments for undesired behaviour, the client is motivated and encouraged to participate in and work towards their desired change.

A trusting relationship between client and therapist helps keep the client on track when new behaviours are hard to maintain. When they succeed in achieving their goals, clients' sense of personal efficacy and self-confidence invariably improves.

That what we *do* is what really matters, as opposed to what we feel or think is not new or exclusive to the province of psychology. From ancient times, philosophers emphasised that it is how we live that ultimately determines whether we live a good and worthwhile life.

Psychology was alerted to the importance of behaviour to human well-being by various theorists from early in the 20th century. Since its development from that time, Behaviour Therapy has been used to treat many conditions, including anxiety, chronic pain, depression and stress.

Behaviour Therapy and Goals

An important aspect of Behaviour Therapy is its emphasis on clearly defined goals. Once a client has a clear goal or set of goals in mind, it is easier to keep motivated when things get difficult. This can happen when deep-seated behaviours are challenged. Often 'progress goals' are set, so that change can occur in an orderly and manageable sequence over time.

For example, a person wanting to lose weight might choose an end-weight that they want to achieve, and an amount of weight they want to lose each week. To help them do this, their behaviour might be to stick to a specific eating plan each day.

They allocate themselves a 'reward' if they do so, such as a treat at the end of the week, or a 'punishment' if they do not, such as an extra hour's hard work at the gym.

Clients are always involved in the setting of their behaviour plans. They make sure that their plan is achievable within their allocated time-frame. Support from family and friends is valuable.

An important role for therapists is giving compliments, support and encouragement to clients. Therapists also challenge clients when they stray from their behaviour plan.

Difficult though the road may be, clients who successfully achieve their goals in Behaviour Therapy invariably feel a sense of achievement and satisfaction. Their self-esteem improves and they gain a new lease on life, with more self-confidence and an improved sense of self-efficacy. They have achieved their goals and now know that they *can* do it.

To know more or book a session to explore and achieve your goals, contact us via the details below.