



Different therapeutic approaches in mental health

Systemic Approach

The systemic approach considers the individual in his/her environment, his/her relational system (couple, family, group of belonging, etc.), and not as an isolated being. It considers that difficulties can sometimes be anchored in a dynamic between several people. The systems approach often involves family follow-up to initiate a process of change together. The systems approach can also be applied in one-on-one interviews. The person will then be invited to reflect on how their interactions with loved ones or their family history influence their experiences.

Cognitive Behavioural Approach

This approach is focused primarily on the here and now. It assumes that emotions and behaviors are determined more by the interpretation that individuals give to an event than by the event itself, as well as by the theories of conditioning. In meetings, the patient and the therapist identify together the difficulties of the person and define the therapeutic objectives to be achieved. Challenges are addressed from the perspective of dysfunctional thoughts and behaviours. They also highlight the beliefs, thought mechanisms and habits that contribute to the client's distress and work to promote more flexible thinking to allow for a better adaptation of the person to his current situation. This approach also aims to recognize emotions and sensations that can sometimes be destabilizing. Strategies for change and the learning of new skills are tested and practiced during homework tasks that complement the work done in the session. Once these techniques have been mastered, it is sometimes recommended that the individual gradually expose oneself to situations that typically cause difficulties. These "exposure" techniques can take many forms (including imagination, real situations or listening to your bodily sensations). These exercises allow a consolidation of learning and also improve tolerance to negative emotions that may occur.

Psychodynamic Approach

The psychodynamic approach is inspired by the psychoanalytic model. This approach takes place face-to-face and focuses more on the here and now, unlike classical psychoanalysis. It is based on a neutral and supportive listening on the part of the therapist which in turn allows the patient to express himself freely, without judgment, and in a respectful setting. The therapist supports the client in understanding their emotions and unconscious patterns of behavior. This in turn allows the client to know themselves better and make better decisions for themselves.

Neuropsychological Approach

At the end of the neuropsychological evaluation, personalized care can be set up if necessary. Rehabilitation sessions last between 30 minutes to one hour, and the number of sessions varies according to the needs of each client. The proposed exercises are carried out during sessions, and the program is chosen by the neuropsychologist. This may contain sessions during which practical exercises called "paper-pencil" are carried out by the patient or sessions to teach strategies or adjustments on a daily basis (it is often a combination of both). The objective of "pure" cognitive rehabilitation is to work on the impaired cognitive function(s) (memory, attentional and executive functions, etc.). At the same time, the neuropsychologist can educate the client about his/her disorder, his/her difficulties and their impact on functioning and thus, teach him/her strategies to implement in everyday life.

Sensory Therapy

To different degrees and depending on the person, we all have sensory defenses. They are the result of a defensive reaction or an over-reaction of our sense of protection. Sensory integration therapy attempts, through its stimulation activities, to organize the messages received by the brain. It is aimed at children with symptoms such as clumsiness, difficulty concentrating, balance problems, etc. But it is also very suitable for children with more acute difficulties. For example, some people have sensory sensitivities which prevent them from interacting well with their environment. This can go so far as to compromise their development. Sensory integration aims to allow the individual to feel, understand and organize sensory information from one's body and environment. This information is transmitted by sensory systems such as vision, touch, smell, taste, hearing as well as vestibular and proprioceptive systems.

Mentalization

The failure of mentalization, especially during emotional interactions, is often a central challenge of borderline personality disorder. Treatment based on mentalization integrates attachment theories, cognitive psychology, psychodynamic approach and developmental neuroscience. Its objective is to increase the ability of the client and the therapist to mentalize together, that is to say, to understand the human experience as being underpinned by mental states pertaining to the needs, emotions, motivations, and intentions of each one. Indeed, a difficulty in optimally mentalizing could explain the exacerbation of symptoms common to several types of mental disorders such as dysregulation of emotions, misinterpretation of interpersonal signals and harmful impulsive behaviors.





Mindfulness (DBT)

Mindfulness is a state of consciousness in which a person is in the present, in the experience of the moment and accepts what is, without judgment and without expectation. Mindfulness-based programs aim at stress reduction and mental calming. This approach makes it possible to develop a regular and personalized practice. Indeed, the main difficulty concerning the practice of mindfulness is consistency: as with sports practice, it is essential to practice regularly if we want to feel the benefits. There are two ways to practice mindfulness: through formal practice (meditation exercises) and through informal practice in everyday actions. The objective is to for a moment (sometimes very short) be fully present in the moment without the usual distraction of the flow of our thoughts.

EMDR

The "Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing" is a therapeutic approach that has been the subject of much research and has proven its effectiveness in the treatment of trauma and several other mental health problems. We know that if a person is very upset during a difficult event, his brain does not integrate the information as it would in usual times. So much so that when the person thinks about it, he relives the painful emotions often with the same intensity as at the time of the event: the smells, the images, the sounds, the negative thoughts, the physical sensations, etc. have remained the same. In the long term, these memories are "frozen" in the brain and can have harmful effects which may interfere with a person's daily functioning, their way of seeing the world and their interpersonal relationships. Thus, after EMDR sessions, the initial invasive images, sounds, sensations and emotions are no longer reactivated when the person thinks back to the event. The event is still remembered, but without the intense distress.

Medical / pharmaceutical approach

Medications are often used to treat or reduce symptoms related to a mental health disorder. Medication is selected based on the characteristics of the drug (e.g., efficacy, safety of use, route of administration, route of elimination, frequency of intake, cost), the patient (e.g., age, sex, other medical condition, pregnancy, ethnicity, other genetic factors), and then the disease to be treated. The risks and benefits of the drug are also evaluated; all medications pose risks. Also, it may be that medication is a good option while settling/soothing some symptoms, but often, a combined approach with psychotherapy is recommended to address causes other than medical or biological.



Art therapy

Art therapy is defined as an approach of psychological support of a person or a group in difficulty, centered on the expression of oneself, one's thoughts, emotions and conflicts in a process of image creation.

The specificity of art therapy is expressed in the use of plastic media aimed at understanding and solving problems, relieving anxiety and psychological and physical suffering or simply the evolution and psychological well-being of the person or group.

RESOURCES

- **Mental health services, assistance and support in your community** (www.esantementale.ca)
- **Mindfulness in psychotherapy** (www.mindfulness.cps-emotions.be)
- **CBT therapeutic tools** (www.therapistaid.com)
- **Alternative and Community Network of Mental Health Organizations in the Island of Montreal** (www.racorsm.org)
- **Kiddo Active Therapy** (www.kiddoactive.com)
- **Cognitive-behavioral therapy** (www.tccmontreal.com)
- **EMDR** (www.emdr.ca)
- **Canadian mental health association** (www.acsmmontreal.qc.ca)

