

Behavioral Conceptualization and Intervention in Psychotherapy

Human functioning is rooted in action and other parts of the behavioral system. Ineffective actions are both the cause and effect of psychological problems. Psychotherapy is only effective if it can foster tangible changes in behavior. When we help our clients enact more effective behaviors, it is likely to improve their well-being as well as support more functional thoughts and adaptive emotions.

This seminar will teach both behavioral conceptualization and intervention methods. Reinforcement and exposure will be highlighted as common factors as well as more technical interventions. Distinct methods of behavioral formulation will be introduced that allow us to understand different parts of the behavioral system. Reinforcement and operant conditioning will be highlighted as the most accessible way to approach cognitive conceptualization. Diversity is addressed in this seminar by describing the way cultural contexts shape clients' behavior.

Video demonstrations of foundational behavioral skills drawn from Behavioral Activation will be used to help participants prepare for practice. These skills will address three general processes: (1) Exploration and functional analysis of current patterns, (2) Guided discovery to uncover more adaptive functioning, and (3) Enacting adaptation outside of psychotherapy. More advanced behavioral interventions will be previewed as possibilities for future professional development.

Although behavior change is often an essential part of treatment, there are times when actions cannot be easily modified. In some situations, clients may prefer to approach risky behaviors using a harm reduction approach rather than eliminating certain behaviors completely. This seminar will prepare psychotherapists to discuss with clients when to emphasize harm reduction and when to promote behavior change.

This seminar is part of Level One of Training in Unified Psychotherapy (TUP), focusing on working interactively with cognition, emotion, and behavior. Instead of exclusively focusing on behavior as a lever of change, TUP encourages psychotherapists to develop a wide repertoire of skills that can be adapted to the individual needs of each client.

Target Audience

Psychologists Social Workers Counselors
Therapists Psychiatrists Nurses

Course level: Intermediate

Learning Objectives

At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

1. Describe how reinforcement and exposure can be seen as common factors that underlie the effectiveness of all approaches to psychotherapy.
2. Explain how effective actions are likely to reduce psychological symptoms, foster functional cognitions, and support adaptive emotions.
3. Describe how exploring naturally-occurring and externally-imposed patterns of reinforcement can be used as an accessible way to begin to explore the behavioral system.
4. Identify behavioral skills related to functional analysis, guided discovery, and enacting adaptation outside of psychotherapy.
5. Describe the types of behaviors that clients may want to eliminate and the types of actions that they may want to manage using a harm-reduction approach.

Seminar Schedule

Typically begins at 10 AM and ends at 1:15 PM Eastern time. There is one 15 minute break. However, check the webinar schedule.

Outline

Begin 10 AM ET
Historical Context
Prominent Behaviorists
Paradigms
Techniques or Principles of Change
Positive Reinforcement
Exposure
Markers for Focusing on Actions
Identifying Skills Deficits
Modeling Compassion as you Work on Change
Values and Committed Actions
A New Behavioral Paradigm

11:30 Break (15 min)

Multidimensional Survey
Conceptualization
Examples
Distinguishing Effective from Ineffective Behaviors

Video Demonstration
Review of Behavioral Skills based on Demonstration

Change versus Acceptance
Harm Reduction
More Behavioral Strategies

Ends 1:15 PM ET

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Continuing Education Credit

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The Presenter

Jeff E. Harris received his Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from The Ohio State University in 1990. In 2004, he was awarded board certification as a Specialist in Counseling Psychology by the American Board of Professional Psychology. Dr. Harris has worked as a psychologist, training director, and director of counseling at student counseling centers at Southern Illinois University, the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and New Mexico State University. He also worked as an associate professor of Counseling Psychology at Texas Woman's University. Dr. Harris is a licensed psychology, currently providing telehealth psychotherapy for Amwell Medical Group and BetterHelp. Dr. Harris is the author or co-author of two books: *Workshops: Designing and Facilitating Experiential Learning* (Brooks-Harris & Stock-Ward, 1999) and *Integrative Multitheoretical Psychotherapy* (Brooks-Harris, 2008). In 2015, Dr. Harris started collaborating with other scholars to define Unified Psychotherapy as a distinct route to integration. Dr. Harris has developed Training in Unified Psychotherapy (TUP) as a webinar series and certification program to teach therapists to think about clients in a holistic manner and to utilize diverse interventions based on the individual needs of each client.

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This seminar has been reviewed and approved by Keith Hannan, Ph.D., Phil Rich, LICSW, Daphne Fatter, Ph.D., and Loreen Yearick, MSN, RN. This approval expires on March 1, 2025.

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