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Dilemma-focused therapy: A new Psychological intervention for depression

A variety of psychotherapies for depression have received substantial empirical support but the rates of recovery are still unsufficient and relapse is all too common. Research on cognitive conflicts has shown that personal dilemmas can be found in over 90% of all patients with depression but current psychotherapies do not focus on these dilemmas at least in a direct way. Dilemma-Focused Therapy (DFT) is a brief intervention which can complement other therapies by targeting on personal dilemmas, an issue which is usually not dealt with but which could explain much of the reluctance to change and relapse that occurs in the course of the treatment for depression.

DFT is constructivist-based intervention derived from personal construct theory which has already been supported in an RCT. It uses the Repertory Grid Technique (RGT) for the study of a person's meaning system. One type of conflict which can be detected with the RGT is implicative dilemma: a desired change on one construct (e.g. "sad-happy") has an undesired implication on another construct (e.g. "cares for others vs. selfish"). Thus, achieving change (e.g., becoming happy) implies an undesirable change in self-identity (e.g., becoming selfish). Instead of focusing only in symptoms or negative thoughts, DFT is oriented to help clients recognize both sides of the dilemma: the need for change and the need for continuity and for protecting the sense of identity. By empowering clients to deal with their internal conflicts they can resolve their personal dilemmas and govern their lives in a more integrated way.

Biography

Guillem Feixas Viaplana is currently Professor at the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Barcelona, completed his PhD at this center and holds a Postdoc position at the University of Memphis, USA. He is the Director of the Master in Cognitive Social Therapy and other Postgraduate courses. He has published more than 90 papers in reputed journals and 10 books and led several research projects. His investigations have been focused in interpersonal construing and its role in health (both mental and physical), and in the process of psychotherapy.

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