

Short Term or Long Term Therapy Which One is Best? Well...Both!

Though psychoanalysis is known to be the most consuming of all therapies, Freud himself dabbled in short-term therapy.

In fact, the belief that psychological difficulties can be addressed and remedied in a single session sounds far-fetched. Yet, short-term therapy can be helpful and even highly effective. Indeed, it is believed that many clients, as many as 20-30 % , who consult a therapist never go back after the first session. Now, many advocates of brief psychotherapies attempt to maximize the brief encounters with the client or as I have come to refer to it “McDonalds Drive Thru” therapy. Given the high percentage of drop outs after the first or second session, it would be wise to focus exclusively on achieving the most gains in the shortest time possible. Indeed, short-term therapy can be surprisingly short, somewhere between three (3) to five (5) sessions. Some advocates of brief short term therapy also believe that one session of approximately 1.5 hours can be highly effective in addressing simple, pragmatic solutions to very specific problems.

Instead of discussing all aspects of the past and present circumstances, brief psychotherapy is geared toward empowering clients toward workable, simple solutions.

To add to this belief, there is evidence that short term psychotherapies can be effective as long term therapies. However, despite these encouraging outcomes many proponents of long-term therapies suggest that short term therapy is simply a “band-aid approach” to treating client problems. They argue that it is not sufficient to focus on the symptoms of the problem without fully understanding and appreciating their origins. As well, all people cannot be helped with brief therapies. We cannot expect persons to be open and share their private and personal stories to a stranger after only a few a sessions. This, coupled with the notion of trust in the therapeutic relationship, makes short-term psychotherapies difficult for clients who wish to explore deep inner conflicts. Regardless of the efficacy of either short term or long term therapies, there are opportunities for persons to benefit from both.

Brief Therapy can be Helpful if:

- Have a very specific problem;
- Wonder if a particular situation and your reaction to it is normal.
- If you have been successful in dealing with life problems in the past
- If you believe in short term counseling.

Long Term Therapy Could Help you If:

- If you want to understand certain patterns of behavior and their origins.
- Have had chronic difficulties with family and intimate relationships.
- Would like to be more proactive in dealing with life struggles.
- Are experiencing mental health issues and may require medication.

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