

Philosophy of ISTDP

ISTDP focuses on unconscious mental processes (perceptions, past events, feelings about events, and distorted beliefs) as the cause of emotional disturbance. What distinguishes practitioners of ISTDP is that we believe that psychological treatment should be both comprehensive and efficient (usually under 40 hours) and should:

1. •remove symptoms, and
2. •change character traits when necessary.

Findings of clinical improvement must be confirmed by scientifically designed studies that demonstrate that the above changes occur and that they are long lasting, and finally, that treated patients continue to improve even after termination.

To accomplish the above goals, the ISTDP therapist is an active advocate of change rather than a neutral observer. The attitude of the ISTDP therapist is that the patient's time is irreplaceable and comprehensive change is possible in a reasonable, cost-effective time frame.

In ISTDP, experience of core emotion from the past is seen as the transformative vehicle and the therapist relies on non-interpretive techniques: encouragement to feel; challenge to take responsibility to change; and confrontation of resistance to change.

ISTDP therapists ask patients to address the historical roots of their difficulty through highly focused attention on transference phenomenon or life events that activate defences.

ISTDP therapists strive to uncover repressed emotions or "complex feelings" about the past attachment failures. Many patients develop punitive self-structures to cope with these unresolved emotions during their development. ISTDP actively addresses the existence of these punitive structures beginning with the first interview.

ISTDP treatment is usually video recorded to facilitate supervision, consultation, and research into the process of dynamic psychotherapy.

What is Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy?

Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISTDP) has been developed over the last 40 years, initially by Professor Habib Davanloo, MD in Canada and more recently by a number of therapists who have trained with him. ISTDP is a brief, focused therapy that has been shown to be effective with a wide range of psychological/psychiatric problems. It works from the theory that most psychological problems arise from attachment problems that we experienced when we were growing up.

Difficulties in these early relationships create intense feelings, including rage, guilt about that rage and grief about the emotional distance that exists within those relationships. To cope with these feelings, people gradually develop what are known as 'defenses'. These are psychological, emotional and behavioural mechanisms that enable us to avoid the emotional pain we carry from these early relationships. However, these defenses spread throughout most or all aspects of our lives, but are particularly intense in our interpersonal relationships, where we often experience a sense of distance or not feeling truly connected to the people we care about.

Defenses can become the problems in our lives. They are experienced in a range of ways, including depression, anxiety, compulsive actions, physical complaints that have no medical explanation, avoidance behaviours, obsessive and ruminative thinking, self-sabotaging actions in relationships and/or careers, and problems with intimacy and closeness.

ISTDP is an interactive therapy where both the therapist and client work together to identify the way the client experiences their anxiety and the defenses that arise to block the painful feelings from surfacing. Through working together, the therapist and client can overcome these defenses, allowing the previously avoided feelings to come to the surface and then work through these feelings and the thoughts and memories that are attached to them. This rapidly resolves the inner conflicts and restructures the defensive system into a healthy one that can allow close, intimate relationships and removes all psychological problems.

APS CHARTER FOR CLIENTS OF PSYCHOLOGISTS

Before people can work as psychologists they must be registered with the Psychologists Registration Board in their State or Territory. Your psychologist is a member of the Australian Psychological Society (APS), which is the largest professional association of psychologists in Australia, with a comprehensive Code of Ethics and complementary series of Ethical Guidelines.

As a client of an APS psychologist, you have a right to expect that:

- You will be treated with respect
- You will receive a clear explanation of the service you will receive
- Your consent for any service will be sought by the psychologist prior to the service commencing and as it progresses
- You will receive an explanation about the nature and limits of confidentiality surrounding the service
- You will be clear about the goals that you and the psychologist are working toward
- You will receive competent and professional service
- You will receive a clear statement about fees
- An estimate of the number of sessions required to achieve your goals will be discussed
- You will receive a service free from sexual harassment
- You will be shown respect for your cultural background and language tradition

NOTE:

If you have any concerns about the above matters, discuss them with your psychologist. If you have concerns about the conduct of your psychologist, you may call either the Psychologists' Registration Board in your State or Territory, or the Australian Psychological Society on (03) 8662 3300.

September 2005



Your psychologist should be aware of the need to comply with the standards set out in the Psychologists Registration Board prescribed Code of Behaviour for Psychologists. (This document is available on request from the Board.)

As a client, you should expect that the trust you place in your psychologist is not abused.

You should expect your psychologist to

- treat you fairly, regardless of your ethnic, cultural, religious or political beliefs, or your personal life circumstances. (You may need to help your psychologist understand these issues);
- treat you in a way that preserves your dignity and independence;
- explain the limits of confidentiality that apply to your professional relationship;
- refrain from unwarranted coercion, harassment, exploitation or influence.

As a client, you should be aware that psychologists must not engage in any sexual activity with you - whether or not you initiate it.

You should expect your psychologist **not** to:

- initiate any form of sexual conduct with you or in your presence;
- reciprocate any form of sexual conduct;
- detail his or her own sexual problems, desires, practices, preferences or fantasies;
- make sexually suggestive comments or innuendo.

You should always be given the information you need to make a decision.

You should expect your psychologist to:

- explain the therapeutic framework and treatment methods at the beginning and when treatment changes;
- inform you of available options, risks, benefits and costs of treatment;
- allow you to make an informed choice about services being offered;
- request your permission before involving you in teaching or research; check that you understand what is being said to you.

You may contact the Registrar or make a complaint in writing:

The Registrar, Psychologists Registration Board
1st Floor, 379 Collins Street, Melbourne,
Victoria 3000

POSTAL ADDRESS
PO Box 358 Collins Street West, Melbourne
Victoria 8007

Telephone 03 9629 8722
registrar@psychreg.vic.gov.au

Facsimile 03 9629 8744

Email

APS Fact Sheet

Medicare rebates for mental health services provided by psychologists



Medicare rebates are available for psychological treatment by registered psychologists under the Australian Government's Better Access to Mental Health Care initiative. This scheme provides considerable assistance to people living with mental health problems, allowing them greater access to psychologists and providing more affordable mental healthcare.

What is a psychologist?

Psychologists study the way people feel, think, act and interact. Through a range of strategies and therapies they aim to reduce distress and to enhance and promote emotional wellbeing. Psychologists are experts in human behaviour, and have studied the brain, memory, learning and human development. Psychologists can assist people who are having difficulty controlling their emotions, thinking and behaviour, including those with mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, serious and enduring mental illness, addictive behaviours and childhood behaviour disorders.

All psychologists are legally required to be registered with the national registration board, the Psychology Board of Australia, in the same way medical practitioners must be registered. This means that they must be competent and follow a strict Code of Conduct.

Not all counsellors or therapists are registered psychologists. Seeing someone who is registered ensures you receive high quality ethical treatment.

If I have a mental health problem, how can a psychologist help me?

Psychologists specialise in providing therapies for mental health problems. These therapies are effective at treating common mental health conditions including anxiety and depression and most childhood problems.

Can I go directly to a psychologist to receive treatment through Medicare?

You must be referred by your GP, your psychiatrist or paediatrician. Your GP will need to complete a detailed mental health assessment and prepare a Mental Health Treatment Plan before referring you to a psychologist. You should book a longer session with your GP to enable time for this.

What mental health problems can be treated under the Better Access initiative?

'Mental disorder' is a term used to describe a range of clinically diagnosable disorders that significantly impact on a person's emotions, thoughts, social skills and decision-making. The Better Access initiative covers people with mental disorders arising from:

- Alcohol use disorder
- Anxiety disorders
- Adjustment disorder
- Attention deficit disorder
- Bereavement disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Conduct disorder
- Co-occurring anxiety and depression
- Depression
- Drug use disorder
- Eating disorders
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Panic disorder
- Phobic disorder
- Posttraumatic stress disorder
- Psychotic disorders
- Schizophrenia
- Sexual disorders
- Sleep problems

Can I access any psychologist?

Under the scheme you can only see a registered psychologist with a Medicare Provider Number who you have been referred to by your GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician.

Continued →

APS Fact Sheet (Cont.)

← Can I request a referral to a specific psychologist or does my doctor have to choose?

Your doctor must first assess that you require the services of a psychologist. Your doctor may allow you to request a specific psychologist or may refer you to a psychologist that he/she recommends. The psychologist in question must be registered and have a Medicare Provider Number for you to be able to claim the Medicare rebate.

If I am already seeing a psychologist, can I access Medicare benefits?

In order to receive a Medicare rebate, you must be referred to a psychologist by an appropriate medical practitioner (GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician). The doctor must first make an assessment that you need the services of a psychologist. If you are already seeing a psychologist, discuss this with your doctor.

How many sessions with a psychologist am I entitled to?

The Australian Government has recently announced several changes to the allowable number of treatment sessions a person can receive from a psychologist each year under the Better Access program and claim a Medicare rebate.

Eligible people can receive:

- Up to 10 individual sessions in a calendar year. Your referring doctor will assess your progress after the first six sessions.
- Up to 10 group therapy sessions in a calendar year where such services are available and seen as appropriate by your referring doctor and the psychologist.

What will it cost me?

The cost to you will vary depending on the length of the session and the fee being charged by the psychologist.

If the psychologist decides to bulk bill then you will not have to pay anything.

The cost for a psychological therapy session is usually greater than the Medicare rebate, so you will need to pay the difference between what the psychologist charges you and the Medicare rebate.

In some instances a psychologist may choose to bulk bill (ie, aged pensioners, health care card holders), in which case you will not have to pay anything. This will vary and you should check this with the psychologist before commencing your treatment.

How do I pay?

The settlement of the account is your responsibility (unless the psychologist bulk bills you). You may claim a rebate by lodging a claim through Medicare. When billed you can either:

- Pay the full amount of the consultation and use your detailed receipt to claim a Medicare rebate; or
- Pay the difference between the Medicare rebate and the total account amount, and then claim the rebate from Medicare to forward to the psychologist later; or
- Claim from Medicare using your unpaid account.

If the psychologist decides to use the bulk billing method, you assign your right to a benefit to the psychologist as full payment for the psychological service. The psychologist cannot make any additional charge for this service if it has been bulk billed, and will receive the relevant Medicare rebate or 'benefit' from Medicare Australia for the service provided.

Does the Medicare Safety Net apply to my out-of-pocket expenses under this scheme?

Yes. You are responsible for paying any charges in excess of the Medicare rebate for services under this scheme. However, these out-of-pocket expenses will count towards the Medicare Safety Net. The Medicare Safety Net is designed to protect high users of health services from large out-of-pocket expenses. For more information on the Medicare Safety Net, go to: <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/medicare-safety-net>

What about my private health insurance?

You cannot use your private health insurance ancillary cover to top up the Medicare rebates for these services.

You need to decide if you will use Medicare or your private health insurance ancillary cover to pay for psychological services you receive. You can either access rebates from Medicare by following the claiming process or claim where available on your insurer's ancillary benefits.

Further information is available from:

The Australian Psychological Society:
www.psychology.org.au

Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing:
www.health.gov.au

Psychotherapy Fact Sheet

Psychotherapy is a non-drug form of treatment for emotional and psychological issues. It involves talking with a trained professional and can be used in conjunction with medication to treat most major mental health issues.

Sometimes referred to as “the talking cure”, the goal of psychotherapy is to enable you to have satisfying relationships, to work effectively and to take pleasure in life. We aim for not only a decrease in your problems but an increase in your capacity to live with contentment and enjoyment.

What can psychotherapy help with?

You may have problems that are recent or lifelong, mild or crippling in their effect on your life. They may be:

- Anxiety and depression
- Work difficulties
- Relationship problems
- Physical symptoms
- Addictions
- Psychosis

Psychotherapy can help with most emotional and psychological problems that affect your life. It is well known that the body and mind interact, sometimes creating physical illness from the psychological stress you live with, in addition to the emotional upset you can sometimes experience.

Psychotherapy can help by decreasing the stress inside, and improving the ways you handle it.

How does psychotherapy work?

The first step is to develop with you, an understanding of how the problems you are experiencing are affecting your life and activating stress. Then we work in partnership to build your capacity to live without the problems and help you to live a life that is independent, creative, contented and healthy.

Evidence for effectiveness

There is extensive evidence for the effectiveness of psychotherapy in treating a wide range of emotional and psychological issues from anxiety and depression to psychosis and some medically unexplained conditions. For more information go to www.istdp.ca

How many sessions will you need?

This form of psychotherapy is brief. Some people require as few as 5 sessions. Others may require 40 sessions. What you require will be tailored to your unique needs and circumstances. Sessions are usually weekly in order to maintain the flow of the therapy and sustain your focus on daily experiences.

Assessments

When you contact the psychologist to make an appointment you will be sent an information pack which includes a questionnaire and consent forms. You should read and sign the consent forms if you agree and bring them with you to the first session.

How much does it cost?

Sessions are 50–60 minutes and cost \$215.00 (out of pocket \$88.50).

Medicare rebate

With a referral from your GP and a Mental Health Plan, you can receive a rebate of \$126.50 per session for up to ~~ten~~ sessions per annum. You may be eligible for another 10 sessions in the next calendar year. We can process this rebate into your bank account at time of payment.

Video recording of sessions

All psychotherapy sessions are video recorded. This is for quality purposes so that the therapist can review the therapy session, and also discuss the therapy with his/her supervisor. Supervision is standard practice for psychologists and many other health professionals. The recording is kept securely in a locked room and is not shared with any other persons without your consent. You may ask for the video recording to be destroyed at any time.

Where?

During the COVID-19 pandemic all therapy is teletherapy via video or phone.

How do you make an appointment?

For further information or to make an appointment phone Bernie McCarthy on:

0408 145 819