

Six Factors Common to all Psychotherapies

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- Dr. Judd Marmon identifies six basic common denominators inherent in all psychotherapies; dynamic, behavioral, or humanistic and the correlating factor, element, or dimension existing within the twelve steps and fellowship of Alcoholic's Anonymous.

The Six Factors

- 1. Release of emotional tension in the context of hope and expectation of receiving help is realized in first five steps of AA.**
 - Step 1 – “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol and our lives had become unmanageable.” In this initial step of surrender, recovering persons report distinct experiences of relief, intermingled with feelings of hope in varying degrees.
 - Step 2 – “Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” This solidifies the idea that there is help for the troubled addict.

The Six Factors

- Step 3 – “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.” In this relinquishing of self-will, of omnipotence, the addict understands and submits to a power greater than oneself.
- Step 4 - “Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves” and Step 5 – “Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs” work in unison to bring about a release of emotional tension in the context of hope and expectation of receiving help.

The Six Factors

2. **Cognitive learning about the basis for the patient's difficulties.**

In A.A., the basic text of the fellowship, Alcoholics Anonymous identifies alcoholism as an illness, a disease that is presented to the new comer (and heard often in meetings) as the basis of most if not all of the alcoholic's difficulties, problems, or unmanageability's of body, mind, emotion, spirit, and relationships. This provides an abundance of cognitive learning about the basis of one's difficulties.

The Six Factors

- 3. Operant reconditioning toward more adaptive patterns of behavior by means of explicit or implicit approval-disapproval cues, and also through corrective emotional experiences in therapy.**
In Alcoholics Anonymous meetings sobriety is strongly reinforced. The resumption of drinking or the use of other drugs of dependency is extinguished and the “slipper” is encouraged to keep coming back, without criticism, excess sympathy, or being rescued. Honesty is consistency reinforced as a distinctly more adaptive pattern of behavior and newcomers are often told, “You are as sick as your secrets.”

The Six Factors

- 4. Suggestion and persuasion, overt of covert.**

The slogans and aphorisms that adorn the walls of most meeting places, and which are steadily reiterated during meetings include sayings like “Keep coming back”, “Easy does it,” “Live and let live,” “One day at a time,” or “There but for the grace of God.” This coupled with the retelling of active alcoholic’s stories of surrender and recovery; create an encompassing and consistent persuasion of covert and overt suggestions.

The Six Factors

5. Identification with the therapist or other group members.

This phenomenon of identification takes place in A.A. with the primary identification process being that of identifying as an alcoholic. There is identification of and an acceptance with the group as a higher ideal, for some the initially concept of a higher power is the group or the ideals and principles of AA

The Six Factors

6. Repeated reality-testing or rehearsal of the new adaptive techniques.

Within A.A. there is on-going discussion of adaptive techniques through participation and sharing of experiences in the meetings. The rule prohibiting cross talk at A.A. meetings provides the alcoholic an opportunity to test reality by being required to live with what they may have just said or shared in the meeting. This cultivates a sense of responsibility for one's self.

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The 'amends' steps of 8, 9, and 10, which require a listing of all persons harmed in the past, then direct amends wherever possible [and Twelve Traditions p. 83), and step 10 (p. 88), involving amendments in the present, taken together, reinforce the realization of the reality that there is a relationship between behavior and consequences, and provide practice in learning to assume responsibility for those consequences.