

Stanley Messer, Robert Neborsky

Brief Therapy

Brief psychodynamic therapy (BPT) employs the major principles of psychoanalytic theory and therapy to treat selected psychiatric disorders or psychological problems in 12 to 25 (or, in the case of personality disorders, up to 40) sessions. Near the beginning of therapy a time limit is set, which is said to induce expectancies as to when change is likely to occur. As in long-term psychoanalytic therapy, principal techniques include reflection, clarification, interpretation and confrontation of impulses, conflicts, defenses and cyclical maladaptive patterns. There are three major spheres in which interventions are typically made, known as *the triangle of insight*: in the transference, that is, about interactions with the therapist; about the patient's maladaptive interactions with others in the present; and with those in the past, which refers to conflicts or interpersonal patterns formed early on, usually in childhood. Connections are often made between two or three of these relationship spheres – transference, present and past.

Compared to long-term psychoanalytic therapy, BPT typically involves more active therapist participation, therapeutic dialogue and challenge. A therapeutic focus is formulated that is expressed in psychodynamic terms such as chronically endured, negative feelings about the self, a core intrapsychic conflict, or a maladaptive interpersonal pattern. The therapist, patient, or both in collaboration, set goals that can be achieved in the time available that might include resolution of a conflict, an improved interpersonal pattern, being more in touch with feelings, greater freedom of choice and alleviation of symptoms or chief complaints. BPT rules out those patients whose ego fragility precludes their ability to profit from a brief uncovering or exploratory therapy, or who take considerable time to engage in or disengage from therapy.

Stanley Messer

Doctor Neborsky will discuss his understanding of the unique therapeutic effects of ISTDP: Why it works so well and why it also fails. This discussion will be in the context of comparisons to other short term models, their strengths and weaknesses. He will interact with dr Messer and hopefully have a rich and in depth discussion of each of their unique points of view.

Robert Neborsky