

What is psychodynamic psychotherapy?

Psychodynamic psychotherapy is a long-term psychological treatment that works with the patient to explore their unique personal history and brings into conscious awareness their relationship patterns and conflicts.

The unconscious refers to the part of the mind running in the background below the level of conscious awareness, which influences our thoughts feelings and behaviours. Psychoanalytically informed therapy helps individuals develop deeper understanding of themselves by exploring links between three main areas. Their early development and childhood relationships, the difficulties and symptoms they may experience in the here and now, and the context of the therapeutic relationship in the room.

It suggests that our minds are structured to keep certain things outside of conscious awareness. This is normal and can be helpful, particularly when individuals have had to find ways to cope with painful situations. However, sometimes when it comes to current relationships these patterns can be problematic.

Who is psychodynamic psychotherapy helpful for?

Psychotherapy can be helpful for many people from a wide variety of backgrounds and of differing psychological problems. It's particularly suitable for people who are interested in understanding themselves, including their own and others contributions to their difficulties, and who have an ability to be open-minded about these experiences. It's worth noting that particularly in the early stages of therapy symptoms may get worse before they get better. This means that the timing of therapy and ensuring that patients have a level of stability and structure in their life outside of treatment to rely on is very important

What do we offer?

When you are referred to us we will offer an initial psychotherapy assessment of normally up to three meetings, but this can be extended when required. This process will help to give you a taste of what psychotherapy may feel like and help us to reach a decision together about whether this might be helpful right now. If appropriate, psychodynamic psychotherapy, either as an individual or a group treatment, may be offered. Occasionally the treatment might be of short duration, for example less than 6 months, but generally speaking psychotherapy is offered between 12 to 18 months for individual treatments, and usually up to 24 months for group treatments.

For our therapies we meet weekly at the same time. This kind of therapy, whether it is individual or in a group, may feel very different to previous treatments that the person has received. It is not structured, like cognitive behavioural therapy or cognitive analytic therapy, and you will be encouraged to bring only what comes to mind at that time. The position and relation you have to the therapist might feel very different also from other ways of working. Part of this approach hopes to facilitate working with unconscious material, and in order to do this the therapist may appear to be more neutral in the room at times which can feel strange at first. In a group setting the therapy has the aim of increasing interpersonal awareness leading to changes in the ways that people relate to themselves and others.