

Psychotherapy Guidebook

**KINETIC**

**PSYCHOTHERAPY**

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# **Kinetic Psychotherapy**

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# Kinetic Psychotherapy

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## DEFINITION

Kinetic Psychotherapy (KPT) is a form of group therapy designed for adults, children, and families to help participants look at their patterns of interaction with each other as well as their behavior in various life situations. Additionally, it is a vehicle for learning to identify and verbalize emotion. Behavior is viewed as a statement made in response to a feeling state. Group members have the opportunity to assess if the manner in which they make their statements is effective. They are encouraged to use adaptive behavior and find alternatives to ineffective patterns of interaction.

Kinetic Psychotherapy accomplishes these aims via a series of physical interactive games that imitate real-life situations. An example is “Frustration,” in which five participants form a circle and attempt to prevent a sixth member from catching the ball that is passed around. As the play continues, three things occur. First, the excluded member begins to experience feelings. These are projected into the game, as evidenced by different responses of various members.

Second, as feelings become apparent, the individual assumes his characteristic coping response to such a situation. For example, the one who usually gives up when frustrated will begin to give up. The game is stopped at this point and the player is given an opportunity to view his response pattern. If it is effective, the participant is encouraged to use it; however, in the case of the person who gives up, he is aided by the group in finding an alternative coping mechanism that fits with the person's style. Another useful example is that of the person who withholds expression of emotion when angry. As the individual becomes angry in the game and a typical pattern emerges, he has an opportunity to verbally communicate this feeling directly to another. A structure exists in which all emotions can be identified and verbally expressed with the person never being pushed past the point that he can tolerate. As a result, the person experiences a resolution of a confrontation.

Third, associations to other experiences of similar feeling tone become conscious and are available for discussion, which occurs at the end of the activity session. This verbal interchange is relatively traditional in its technique. Behavior observed in the activity period is examined and related to behavior in real-life situations.

## HISTORY

KPT was developed by this writer essentially by accident. After

observing a number of youngsters interact in a game situation, I found that affective (emotional) responses were more intense and that characteristic patterns of response became evident in a way not possible with traditional verbal or play approaches. I experimented with hundreds of games that have been distilled to the existing fifty activities now used. Each of these is designed to imitate a real-life situation in feeling tone and to stimulate interaction. Experimental studies with children indicate a high rate of behavioral change (80 percent) within a treatment time of six months with weekly group meetings. A 10 percent regression rate was revealed by a two-year follow-up. Work with adults has not been documented experimentally.

## TECHNIQUE

Kinetic Psychotherapy combines the three approaches of the Psychoanalytic, Existential, and Behaviorist schools. After an intensive evaluation, a person is placed in a group of six that is balanced to include several persons of aggressive and several of passive behavioral styles. Psychoanalytic theory is considered as one participates in the activities, and the psychodynamics of this individual are constantly considered within the context of the activity. If he is interested in pursuing the cause of various behaviors, this is explored in the verbal group discussion segment. Here, intrapsychic material that has become available is also examined. The experiential aspect of KPT is fundamental to how a person becomes aware of

present patterns and how one can retrain oneself to use new ones. As the game is stopped and the participant focuses on the pattern the instant it is occurring, an experiential awareness occurs in which the behavior suddenly becomes clear. Similarly, as an individual practices a new behavior, this becomes part of the ego functioning and is added to a person's repertoire of responses. The behaviorist orientation is stressed in understanding how new behaviors are reinforced. Since it is a group therapy, feedback based on observed behavior is immediately available to participants. As an adaptive behavior is learned, group members and the therapist are often spontaneously supportive. Additionally, the person usually encounters positive response in life situations as techniques learned in the group are applied. The resulting sense of competency is a strong reinforcer.

In each situation, an individual's style is respected. A person who has been quiet for thirty years is not expected to become a screamer. Defenses are also highly respected. Members are never forced to talk about what they don't want to discuss, nor are they forced to participate when they feel resistant. This situation is worked with in the way resistances traditionally are. Hopefully, they are put into some context that helps the person understand the behavior.

## **APPLICATIONS**



With adults, KPT has proven very effective in work with nonpsychotic cases of depression, anxiety, phobias, social skill training, and general situations where a person needs to learn more effective ways of facing, accepting, and using emotion in interpersonal situations. With children KPT has proven valuable in dealing with cases where behavior ranges from overly passive to overly aggressive. Adjustment reactions, phobias, immature behavior, and emotional problems stemming from learning disabilities all have shown impressive diminution. As a tool for family therapy KPT helps make explicit the family process and facilitates interventions for improved communication.

In summary, Kinetic Psychotherapy is a form of group therapy suited for those who need to face and change current patterns of functioning. By using a range of physical interactive games as its base, KPT allows participants to face their coping systems and aids them in finding alternatives that fit their basic style.