PSYC1023- Abnormal Psychology

LECTURE 1: HISTORY OF ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY

- Human beings have been interested in the abnormal behaviours of offers for many thousands of year
- Different societies have conceptualised abnormal behaviours in multiple different ways
  - Including conceptualising what they might be and
  - what might cause them to occur

Circa 8000BC

- Sociologists think that around 8000BC thought that physical phenomena that occurred in people had a supernatural basis. The people behaviours were caused by supernatural spirits. There are three different types of beliefs, that are still prevalent today (voodoo dolls, dreamcatchers) due to random success (potential explanation):
  - Sympathetic Magic: The belief that by influencing things that are similar to a person or that were once close to that person, one can influence the person.
  - Homeopathic Magic: The type of sympathetic magic involving the belief that doing something to the likeness of a person will influence that person.
  - Contagious Magic: The type of sympathetic magic which involves the belief that what one does to something that a person once owned or that was close to a person will influence that person.
- Archaeologists have found Skulls of Palaeolithic human beings have been found to have man-made holes drilled into them – the area around the holes indicates that the person was alive during the procedure. This practice is known as Trepanation (blooding)- Practice that still occurs today.
- There is no exact reason why earlier civilisation took part in these practices. There is some theorising around the idea was used to alleviate physical symptoms such as headache or abnormal behaviours.

Circa 6000-5000 BC: Ancient Egypt

- In ancient Egypt physical and mental illness were viewed as synonymous
- The causes of mental illness
  - Evil spirits
  - Wrath of Gods
- Physicians, magicians and priests all had the same role
- The first civilisation to develop the profession of medicine
- Develop an empirical technique towards illness- this was a first step away from the supernatural prehistoric human beings
  - Facts and observation

Ancient Greece and Rome (Circa 500BCE- 400CE)

- The first Western culture that believed in finding rational answers to the great questions of earthly life. Moved away from the old superstitious understanding of the world.

- Hippocrates (400BC)- He gave rise to the notion of modern scientific medicine (and psychology/ psychiatry)
- Hippocrates came up with Humorism (humor (latin origin) = fluid) positing that an excess of deficiency of any of the four distinct bodily fluids (blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm) in a person directly influences their temperament and their health. Surprisingly, these concepts survive today. This indicates that Hippocrates was an astute observer of human disposition.

Medieval or Middle Ages (Circa 400- 1400s)

- Superstition made a return – largely reinforced by the Church – in Western civilizations
  - Essentially mental illness and odd behaviour was demonised
- Not a good time and place in history to have a mental illness
- Strange and abnormal behaviours (schizophrenia, mental retardation, depression, psychosis, etc.) treated by – prayer, exorcism, beatings, cross waving, starvation, burning.

The Renaissance (Circa 1400s-1700s)

- Unprecedented period of intellectual expansion– certainly the beginning of the revival of intellectual ideas that began in Ancient Greece and Rome.
- It was a time of great advance in artistic production but also scientific production. People were trying to and becoming more interested in understanding the human body and anatomy, some of the greatest texts were produced during this time. It was a time of great understanding of how the human body works. Looking at bodies for scientific purposes as well as for art was introduced.
  - Copernicus: I think that the Earth turns on an axis and is not the centre of the universe
  - Descartes: The birth of modern psychology began with Descartas as he introduced the idea that the body (matter) and the mind (spirit) are two different things.
  - Leonardo Da Vinci: drawing of muscular systems (e.g. utero, the heart, vascular system) are some of the first on human record
  - Gutenberg: invented the printing press and made the spread of all these new ideas possible.
- Scientific theorising and debate about medical illness (including mental illness) flourished throughout Europe, and other areas of the globe
- It was a time of rise in pity, empathy and understanding for the mentally ill
- However,
  - It was also a time when the superstitions of the past would be revived
  - It was also a time when some, in an attempt to improve understanding of mental illness, would show lack of compassion. They were treated as test subjects, people to be understood, rather than people to be treated and helped.

The Birth of Mental Asylums

- In the late 15^{th} and 16^{th} centuries western civilisations set up Asylums to house and often study, the mentally ill.
- These were not the first incarnation of the idea of such an institution.
  - The earliest known mental hospitals were established in the Arab world, in Baghdad and in Cairo (Circa AD 918)

    - Patients of these hospitals were thought to be possessed or suffering some other spirit based affliction
- The main purpose of the Asylums of Europe and America was to protect society from the abnormal behaviour of the inmates
- Individuals placed in an Asylum often endured horrific living conditions and treatment – they were considered subhuman.
- A famous example of one such Asylum is Bethlem Royal Hospital:
    - The hospital is over 600 years old
    - The hospital began as a social institution run by religious authorities (in 13th Century), but became increasingly secular until it was taken over by the state in 1546, and made into a hospital
    - Bethlem is a notorious historical example of the cruelties of such institutions.
    - People were Starved and chained up
    - Today the hospital is still a mental institution, but nothing like it's former incarnation

15th and 16TH Centuries

- Witch hunts were very much vogue
- Again, those who were mentally ill were likely target- in addition to those who were displaying socially undesirable behaviour.
- In many instances, it has been shown that which hunts were enacted for financial gain.
- Despite the renaissance and scientific advancement in society, we were still treating individuals in society with superstitious beliefs.

18th and 19th Centuries

- Moral Treatment Movement- was a movement towards more compassionate and empathic treatment of individuals. This movement involved:
    - Founding of asylums and retreats with the goal of curing patients
    - Offered patients books to read (primarily the bible) and medial jobs (farm work)
    - Placed an emphasis on moral management
        • No indignities
        • Good diet
        • Visitors
        • Restricted physical restraint
        • Recreation

Alongside compassionate treatment, there is an exponential ability to understand these mental disorders and individuals.

20th and 21st Century

- Further development of institutions intended to serve those who were mentally ill
- Reduced stigma around mental illnesses
- Development of different treatments for mental illnesses has increased rapidly
- These therapies are offered by individual, and groups of, therapists in private practice and in public institutions (often hospitals)

SIGMUND FREUD: Psychodynamic psychology

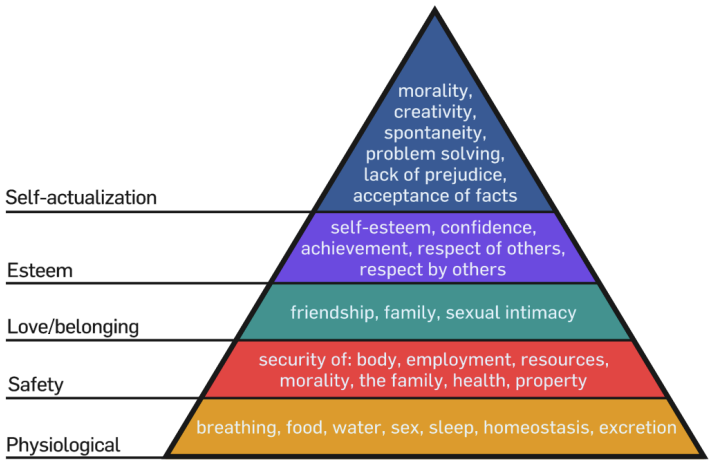
- In this view of abnormal psychology, according to the theory, Mental illness is caused by maladaptive thoughts and behaviours which occur because of conflict occurring between conscious and unconscious processes
- In therapy, the psychologist is seen as the expert and facilitates the patient to come to realisations in order to cure their affliction
- Psychodynamic psychology is practiced widely especially in many countries in Europe.
- It involves dream interpretation and free association.
- Has been criticised as unscientific in some research communities. It is a theory which is difficult to refute. E.g. "I say you have depression because of unconscious memories from childhood" – how can I confirm that this is the case?

EDWARD THORNDIKE 1911: Behaviour Therapy (Behaviour Modification)

- All our behaviours and our personality is learnt by experience
- We learn to act in certain ways and think certain things because of associations we form between important objects (e.g., people, animals, places, inanimate objects) and important events (e.g., having fun, being fearful, receiving a reward, receiving a punishment)
- A person develops a mental illness because of unhelpful or maladaptive learning experiences. E.g. being bitten by a dog leads to dog phobia
- People overcome their afflictions by changing the associations they have in their minds- typically by facing their fears and worries. This is known as exposure therapy.

ABRAHAM MASLOW: Humanist Psychology

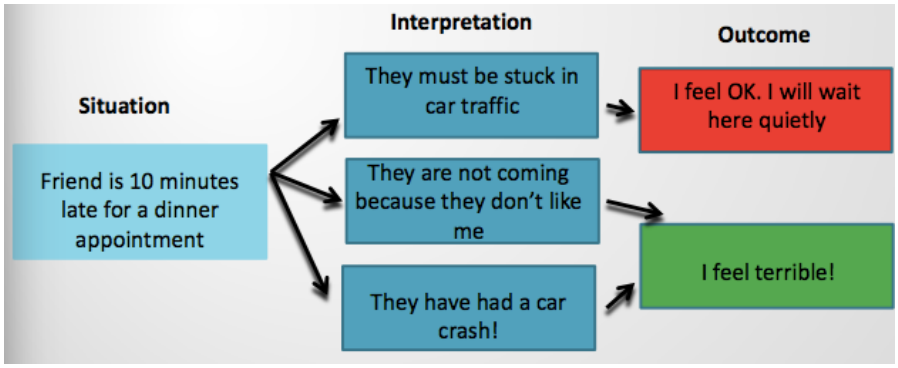
- Had a desire to focus on what is good about human beings as opposed to what is bad
- What makes a person resilient in the face of extreme adversity. E.g. Post WWII
- Emphasised a collaboration between therapist and client
- Help the client become fully actualised
- When a person cannot be what they want to be they become ego dystonic
- All people need to be helped to become fully self-actualised
- Hierarchy of Needs- You must satisfy the requirements at the lower level before you may effectively progress to the next. Thus, we need to first satisfy all our physiological needs before we start to desire any of the higher categories.
- This model has been influential in how we treat individuals.
- This model has been used widely in advertising- where they appeal to the lower levels of the pyramid.

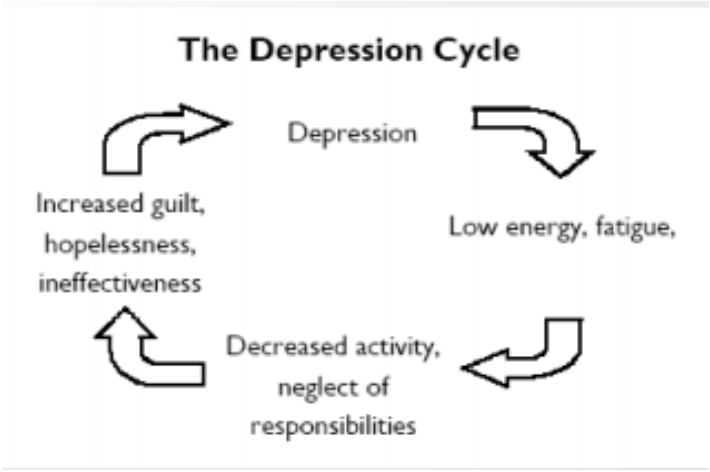


AARON T. BLACK: Cognitive Therapy

- He suggested that events are ambiguous- what makes us feel bad is our interpretation of events
  - Negative interpretations about the past, present and future
  - Therapist works with client to challenge core negative beliefs about the world and about self.
- Widely successful therapy

E.g. All three of these observations are neither valid than the last. The outcome of how it makes you feel is vastly different, in the first case you will feel OK however, the next two interpretations, will make you feel terrible. Hence, this ambiguous situation of a friend being 10 minutes late can be influenced by our interpretative style, our core belief about the world.



PETER LEWINSOHN: Behavioural Activation

- Devised a treatment for depression based on behavioural principles
- Inactivity leads to depression as an individual has less chance for positive reinforcement from positive experiences and hence, more time to reflect on negative experiences impacts mood negatively
- Therapist works like a coach – gradually increasing positive activities (being social, achieving goals – small and big) and reducing negative behaviours (being inactive, negative thinking)