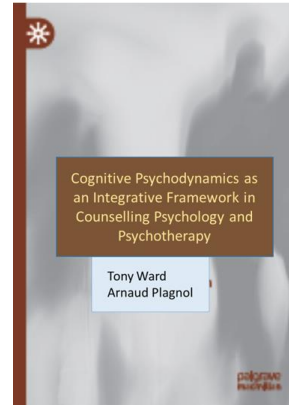


## Theoretical propositions on which the cognitive psychodynamic approach is founded,

For relevant literature, see chapters 1 -4 of :

Ward and Plagnol (in press).  
Cognitive Psychodynamics as an Integrative Framework in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.



- People build up complex internal representations of their experiences and the world.
- Early experiences may be in an experiential, nonverbal form.
- These representations can include behavioural repertoires / scripts. These may have built up over an extended period of time, for example, ways of feeling / reacting in relationships. People may be unaware of this and may find these aspects difficult to articulate.
- Those representations which concern the self are the most elaborate and include life narratives and goals.
- Conscious awareness is influenced and directed by these internal representations, and people are often unaware of these subtle biases.
- Much of our past experience and mental representations remain outside of conscious awareness for much of the time.
- People strive to meet their basic psychological needs.
- This striving is driven by two basic behaviour systems, one around avoidance (of things like painful stimuli), the other around approach (of rewarding and positive experiences).
- This striving process is also directed by representational schemas and scripts. Some of these could be conceived as underlying traditional defence mechanisms, for example, someone may avoid social situations if this makes them anxious but rationalise that they don't really like social events anyway. This avoids the anxiety but does not meet their attachment needs.
- If people fail to move towards meeting their basic psychological needs and goals, this will lead to psychological discomfort. More generally, *lack of internal consistency or incongruence will lead to internal tension*.
- Behaviour is both external and internal, such that psychological processes will impact on how people go about navigating their external space *but also and above all their internal space (their inner world)*. For example, people with depression have a tendency, of which they may be largely unaware, to cut down on the representational space they access. This may be due the negative memories which they have experienced as unpleasant in the past.

## Guidelines for the practice of cognitive psychodynamic therapy.

For further detail, see chapter 5 of:

Ward and Plagnol (in press). *Cognitive Psychodynamics as an Integrative Framework for Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Recognise that *every client has a complex inner world, resulting from their individual lived experience*.
- Acknowledge the insights for any one client will be unique to them.
- Be flexible in terms of time - some clients will gain useful insights quickly, others will need much more time, as the patterns to be explored may be subtle.
- Give space to clients to verbalise their concerns, and feelings of incongruence and inconsistency.
- Recognise that for many clients the nature of the incongruence / difficulties will be difficult to verbalise.
- Recognise and explore the schemas / patterns which may be driving the client's behaviour / incongruence.
- Use the therapeutic relationship as one avenue in which the client's schematic ways of relating will play out - but also recognising that the therapist may not trigger particular issues / patterns.
- Recognise that the therapeutic relationship and space is also a venue for clients to experience new ways of relating and build new schematic patterns which can guide future behaviour.
- Offer interpretations as far as possible in a tentative fashion, *from the client's frame of reference*, so that they do not get enmeshed in the client's relational schemas.
- Enable clients to become aware of their behavioural schemas and scripts, so that they can intervene and choose to do things differently.
- Help clients to develop new schemas / scripts, so that they can successfully change their behaviour and not keep repeating old patterns.
- Help clients to *draw on their inner strengths and resources*, so that they can live their lives in harmony with their complex and rich inner world.

Figure 1. A framework for conceptualising clients in cognitive psychodynamic therapy.

