



An Integrative Approach to Counselling

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What is Integrative Therapy?

Integrative therapy is *“an approach to treatment that involves selecting the techniques from different therapeutic orientations best suited to a client’s particular problem. By tailoring the therapy to the individual, integrative therapists hope to produce the most significant effects.”* (Cherry, 2023).

How is our course structured?

In therapy it is important that clients are offered a safe space, without judgment, to help them explore their thoughts and feelings. At Reflections, our students begin by learning how to offer a safe space and work relationally. They initially study the fundamentals of Person-Centred Counselling and take time practising skills such as empathetic understanding that will help them establish a therapeutic relationship.

During our two year Level 5 Integrative Therapeutic Counselling Advanced Diploma students will also study several other modalities:

- **Existentialism**

Existentialism offers a growing edge of reflection upon own purpose and meaning. Existential therapy takes a philosophical / intellectual approach to therapy and has four main pillars: death, meaning, isolation and freedom. These key areas of life often cause anxiety within people. (Counselling Tutor, 2023).

- **Gestalt therapy**

Gestalt practitioners work with clients to *“help them focus on self-awareness: on what is happening from one moment to the next or, as we often say, in the ‘Here and Now’.* Broadly, Gestalt practitioners help people to focus on their immediate thoughts, feelings and behaviour and to better understand the way they relate to others.” (Gestalt Centre, 2023)

Gestalt therapy uses a variety of methods to help clients increase their self-awareness. Common techniques include: observing the client's body language and movement while they discuss experiences.; role-play where the client acts out different aspects of their personality; Dreamwork; Empty chair – for example the client imagines that someone is sitting in an empty chair and what they want to say to them.

- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)**

In conjunction with the Humanistic school of thought our learners will also consider different CBT approaches. CBT is based on the idea that *“how we think about situations can affect the way we feel and behave.”* (Mind, 2021) Students will learn ways to help a client change unhelpful thinking using a variety of practical strategies and tools.

- **Psychodynamic Counselling**

The Psychodynamic approach focuses on *“an individual’s unconscious thoughts that stem from childhood experiences and now affect current behaviour and thoughts. The urges that drive us to emanate from our unconscious and we are driven by them to repeat patterns of behaviour.”* (Counselling Directory, 2013). Students will learn how to help clients explore what is just below the surface of their awareness. Clients will be supported to bring memories and experiences into their conscious mind, so they can understand how deep-rooted feelings impact on them in the present and can learn to cope with them.

- **Attachment Theory**

Attachment theory (within Object Relations Theory) underpins the Psychodynamic approach. Bowlby (1969) proposes that *“the emotional and social development of an infant is profoundly shaped by their relationship with their primary caregivers.”* Students will learn about attachment styles so they can support clients to understand how they may have influenced their current relationships.

Integrative therapy is not about joining techniques together randomly. Each client is different so careful consideration must be given to assess how techniques will work together and whether they are appropriate for the client. In learning to use an integrative approach our students have a wider range of options to help clients; they have a ‘toolbox’ of approaches and are able to respond flexibly to clients’ needs