Psychotherapy
Concluding Remarks

- Mental illness is ubiquitous

- Mental illnesses exist at the extremes of normal behavior

- Our social context can influence the illness stigmatization

- We have no specific neural bases for many diagnoses in mental health. Behavioral diagnoses frequently overlap.
Take Home Messages

- There is a high prevalence of mental illness.
- Mental illnesses have biological, psychological, and social underpinnings.
- Social factors can influence illnesses and their characterization/stigmatization.
- Complexity of mental illnesses (e.g., symptoms, signs, comorbidity) make diagnosis and treatment extremely challenging.
Impact of mindfulness on regional brain gray matter density

Semantic/Neural Networks

• Current understanding of how the brain works
• Neural activation **reinforces** patterns
• Increased **complexity** leads to increased **risk** of something breaking
• **Extra noise**, leads to **difficulties** in function
Semantic/Neural Networks

• This is *good* because thought patterns (and brains) are adaptive
• This is *bad* because over-activation leads to maladaptive mindsets
  • Our world-view *shrinks*, because unused networks become extinct
  • We become “set in our ways”, because primary pathways are too strong
Semantic/Neural Networks

• This means that by **communicating** we can...
  • From the root word of **communal**, “to make common”
• **Literally** have identical brain states as another person
  • ie: Are “in tune”
• Provide cognitive “physio-therapy” to someone
Gestalt
Gestalt Psychology

- The whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts
- Integrate pieces of information into meaningful wholes
- Principles about how information is organized
What do you see?

Georges-Pierre Seurat

“Sunday Afternoon on the Island of Grande Jatte” 1884-85
Why is this important?

• Our perceptions are a blend of the **external** and **internal**
  • We can never perceive the “objective” world
  • Our *beliefs* and *feelings* interpret the world

• *Our* perception of the world says more about *us*, than the world as such
Suicide

“Why is it that parents teach you how to tie your shoes, but don’t teach you how to live after they kill themselves?”
Figure 1. Median male and female age-specific suicide rates for Canada, 2001–2005.

Source: Statistics Canada
Critical Warning signs of suicide

1) Realistic active plan
   • Time
   • Place
   • Method

2) Preparation
   • Giving away belongings
   • Meeting friends and family
   • Sorting out finances
   • Writing letters

3) Recent credible attempts
Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
• CBT is based on a cognitive understanding of the mind
  • Mental disorders should be understood in terms of information processing
How Does CBT See the Person?

• Neural level
  • “hardware”

• Cognitive level
  • “operating system”

• Knowledge level
  • “software”
  • Comes from society/environment
How Does CBT See the Person?

- **Neural problems** (hardware)
  - Neurotransmitters, neural damage
  - e.g., dopamine and serotonin in depression

- **Cognitive Problems** (operating system)
  - memory, speed, focus
  - e.g., Psychopathy, ADHD

- **Knowledge problems** (software)
  - bad programs
  - bad data
  - e.g., racism, poor coping skills

- **Top down effects**
  - Repeated thought patterns can alter the cognitive level and the neural level
  - e.g., chronic stress, mindfulness
Common Issues

• **Cognitive distortions**
  • An unreasonable way of thinking

• **Inappropriate Core Beliefs**
  • Axioms of our life that are not based in reality or are too rigid

• **Poor protective behaviours**
  • Similar to primitive defenses, these cognitive behaviours attempt to keep your core beliefs intact at all costs. No matter how irrational
Cognitive Distortions

1. Wrong thinking
2. Focus on the negative
3. Focus on blame
4. Theory of mind problems
5. Emotional reasoning
Cognitive Distortions

Wrong thinking

• **All-or-nothing thinking**
  • Thinking of things in absolute terms, like "always", "every" or "never". Few aspects of human behavior are so absolute

• **Overgeneralization**
  • Taking isolated cases and using them to make wide generalizations

• **Causation**
  • Assuming *you or others* directly caused things when that may not have been the case
Cognitive Distortions

• **Wrong thinking** (con’t)
• **Jumping to conclusions**
  • *Mind reading* - Assuming the intentions of others.
  • *Fortune telling* – Assuming you know how things will turn out
• **Control**
  • Exaggerating how much you are controlled by the actions of others
  • Exaggerating how much control you have or should have
Cognitive Distortions

• **Focus on the Negative**

• **Negative Mental focus**
  - Focusing exclusively on certain, usually negative or upsetting, aspects of something while ignoring the rest, like a tiny imperfection in a piece of clothing

• **Disqualifying the positive**
  - Continually "shooting down" positive experiences for arbitrary, ad hoc reasons

• **Magnification and Minimization**
  - Exaggerating negatives and understating positives
Cognitive Distortions

• **Focus on Should**
  • Concentrating on what you think "should" or ought to be rather than the actual situation you are faced with,
  • Having **rigid rules**, which you think should always apply no matter what the circumstances are.

• **Focus on Blame**
  • You hold other people solely responsible for your anguish.
  • This is wrong because you are (almost always) also responsible
Cognitive Distortions

• **Theory of mind problems**
  • Not understanding that there can be more than one valid perspective on things

• **Emotional reasoning**
  • Making decisions and arguments based on how you feel rather than reality
Core Beliefs

• Core beliefs are deeply held, usually unconscious beliefs
• Highly resistant to change
• Involves beliefs about: Self, Others, and Situations
Core Beliefs

• Self
  • I must always succeed, be appreciated, etc
  • I will always fail
  • I am always right
Core Beliefs

• Situation
  • Conditions *must* be safe, hassle free, positive, etc
  • The world is a dangerous place
  • The world is a fair place
  • The world is an unfair place
Core Beliefs

• Others
  • Others *must* always treat me fairly, nicely, etc.
  • Others will hurt me
  • Others will only be nice if they get something
  • Others must be punished
Protective Behaviours

• Approval seeking
  • I will constantly try to make everyone happy

• Inauthentic behavior
  • I will hide what I am really like

• Perfectionism
  • I will do everything perfectly then nothing will go wrong

• Avoidance
  • I will hide from anything that might make me upset
Correcting The Common Issues

ABC(DE)
ABC

• A - activating event
  • something that causes a problematic reaction
• B – belief
  • our reactions depend on our beliefs
  • this is the key to CBT
  • two types of beliefs
    - belief or interpretation about the event
    - core beliefs
ABC

- C - consequence
  - our reaction and the consequences of that reaction
ABC(DE)

• D - disputation
  • dispute bad reactions before (ideally) or after they happen

• E - effective new belief
  • replace bad reactions with good reactions by changing beliefs
Self-Analysis Techniques

- Thought Monitoring
  Be aware of automatic problematic thoughts
- Thought Disputing
  Disagree with automatic problematic thoughts
- Thought Stopping
  Stop the process of an automatic problematic thought
Self-Analysis Techniques

■ Prescription of Healthier (more flexible) Beliefs
  Identify new, healthier beliefs and thoughts

■ Experimenting With Healthier Beliefs
  Try out your new beliefs in real situations

■ Reprocessing of Old Memories
  Go back and challenge the emotions associated with old memories
  Note, this one can be quite upsetting for some people
How does therapy work?

- Lambert (1992) estimates:
  - 40% client changes due to motivation or severity of problem
  - 30% to quality of therapeutic relationship
  - 15% to expectancy (placebo) effects
  - 15% to specific techniques.
How does therapy work?

- Tallman (1999):
- Outside therapy people rarely have friends who listen for more than 20 minutes.
- People close often involved in problem and can’t provide safe impartial perspective
- If not properly trained, can make the situation worse