

Clinical Interview

Clinical interviews in psychological assessments are used to help psychologists diagnose and create a treatment plan for their patient.

A clinical interview is a dialogue between psychologist and patient that is designed to help the psychologist diagnose and plan treatment for the patient. It is often called 'a conversation with a purpose.' What's the difference between you, as a psychologist, talking to Maria and her best friend talking to her? There are several key differences in a normal conversation and a clinical interview.

Conducting a Clinical Interview

Whether you're doing an intake interview, a mental status exam or one of many other types of clinical interviews, there are several elements that are important. First of all, psychologists conducting clinical interviews need to offer a safe space for discussion. The patient needs to be in a nonjudgmental space in order to open up. In addition, reminding a patient that you will not share his information with others unless there's an immediate danger to the patient or someone else will help to build trust and allow the patient to be honest.

Asking open-ended questions is much more valuable than asking yes or no questions. Allowing the patient time to think about and answer open-ended questions will give much better insight. For example, the closed-ended question 'Do you feel depressed?' can be answered with a simple yes or no. It doesn't really give you insight into the patient's thoughts and feelings.

Types of Clinical Interviews

There are many types of clinical interviews that can be used at different times and with different people. Let's look at some of the most common clinical interviews:

The intake interview happens the first time someone comes to see you. This is the interview where you, as the psychologist, ask what brings them to you, what their mental and physical health history is and what they would like to get out of their time with you.

. Diagnostic Interview- The purpose of a diagnostic interview is to obtain a clear understanding of the patient's particular diagnosis. Thus patient-reported symptoms and problems are examined in order to classify the concerns into a diagnosis. Diagnostic interviewing is difficult to ascertain the precise diagnosis through interview alone.

Structured Interview- Structured interviews are those interviews in which the wording and ordering of each query is explicitly specified. It also utilizes tightly operationalized and standardized criteria for the coding, scoring, and interpretation of each interview response.

Unstructured Interview- It follows a much more open, free-flowing form, one only minimally directed by the clinician. An unstructured clinical interview involves an open-ended, free-flowing interaction between the clinician and patient. It is characterized by the absence of a predetermined set of questions, with a focus instead on spontaneous content that emerges during the clinical interaction.

Therapeutic Interview- In this, the interview process is explicitly regarded as a mode of intervention in its own right.

Benefits

There are many benefits of clinical interviews. The first and most important one is to uncover information that the psychologist needs in order to diagnose and/or treat patients.

But, there are other benefits to clinical interviews as well. A clinical interview gives the psychologist access to both verbal and non-verbal information about the patient. As we saw, both verbal and non-verbal information can tell you a lot about a patient's state of mind.