

Introduction to Clinical Psychology

Introduction to Clinical Psychology

Key concepts, historical background, major approaches, and professional practice

1. What Is Clinical Psychology?

Aspect	Description
Definition	The scientific study and application of psychological principles to assess, diagnose, treat, and prevent mental health problems and behavioral disorders.
Primary Goals	• Alleviate psychological distress • Promote adaptive functioning • Enhance overall well-being
Settings	Hospitals, community mental health centers, private practice, schools, correctional facilities, research labs, telehealth platforms.
Core Activities	• Psychological assessment (tests, interviews, observations) • Psychotherapy (individual, group, family) • Consultation to other professionals • Research & program development • Teaching & supervision

2. Historical Milestones

Period	Key Figures & Contributions
Late 19th–early 20th c.	<i>Sigmund Freud</i> – Psychoanalysis; first systematic approach to mental illness.
20th c.	<i>Lightner Witmer</i> (1913) – Coined “clinical psychology” and opened the first psychology clinic.
1930s–1940s	<i>World War II</i> – demand for psychological assessment of soldiers; development of group testing (e.g., Army Alpha).
1950s–1960s	Emergence of behavior therapy (B.F. Skinner, Joseph Wolpe). Rise of humanistic approaches (Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow).

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Period

Key Figures & Contributions

1970s-1980s	Integration of cognitive models (Aaron Beck, Albert Ellis) ? Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).
	Expansion of evidence-based practice and DSM-III (1980) standardizing diagnoses.
1990s-present	Growth of neuroscience , evidence-based interventions , cultural competence , and telepsychology .
	Development of third-wave therapies (e.g., Acceptance & Commitment Therapy, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy).

3. Major Theoretical Orientations

Orientation	Core Assumptions	Typical Techniques
Psychodynamic	Unconscious conflicts, early attachment, defense mechanisms shape behavior.	Free association, dream analysis, transference interpretation.
Behavioral	Learning principles (classical/operant conditioning) drive maladaptive behaviors.	Systematic desensitization, exposure, reinforcement schedules.
Cognitive	Distorted thoughts lead to emotional distress.	Cognitive restructuring, Socratic questioning, thought records.
Humanistic/Existential	Emphasis on personal growth, self-actualization, meaning-making.	Client-centered therapy, Gestalt techniques, existential exploration.
Biopsychosocial	Interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors determines mental health.	Integrated treatment plans (medication + psychotherapy + social support).
Third-Wave CBT	Mindfulness, acceptance, and contextual factors are central.	ACT, DBT, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).

4. Assessment & Diagnosis

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1. Clinical Interview

- Structured (e.g., SCID) or semi-structured formats.
- Gathers history, symptom chronology, functional impact.

2. Psychometric Testing