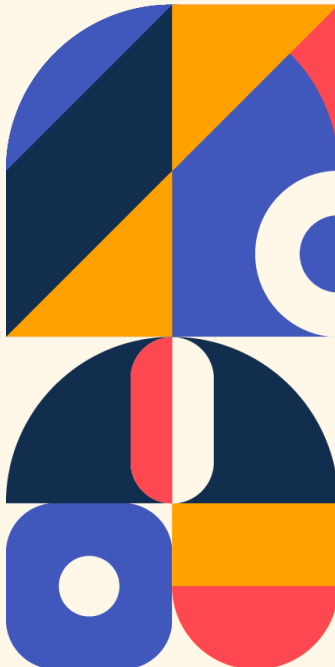


## Single Session Therapy

# Overview of workshop:

- ✓ Definition and description
- ✓ History
- ✓ Objections
- ✓ Two brief case studies
- ✓ Implications for practice - clients/ therapists
- ✓ An overview of the evidence
- ✓ Next steps



## Single sessions - definition and description

Windy Dryden's has provided a really useful readable overview.

He is at the forefront of single session work in the UK.

'Single session work lasts for one session, and one session only' no prep-no follow up

Purists and pragmatist - one session (with the possibility of more)

OAAT - 'one at a time'

# 10 Features of Single Session work:

1. Predicated on finding that a large no of clients attend only one session
2. Approach the session as if it might well be the last. 'One session at a time' (Hoyt, 2011).
3. Don't waste time. (Bobebe and Slive, 2014) 'We have a WHOLE hour'.
4. Clients want change yesterday - let's help them get it today.
5. An approach and a mindset, not a 'school'. Not CBT!
6. *Walk right in; sit right down* - no red tape/ triage/ missed appointments
7. Strike while the iron is hot - takes advantage of client's motivation
8. 'What's right with you?'
9. 'What has worked in the past?' (Don't reinvent the wheel).
10. Not just for the 'worried well' - drug addicts and rough sleepers

Surprisingly high-rates of client satisfaction:  
88% = 'significant improvements'



**'We get in,  
we get help,  
we get out'**

Will McPhail, The New Yorker, 2016.



*"We get in, we get help, and we get out."*

# History of single session work

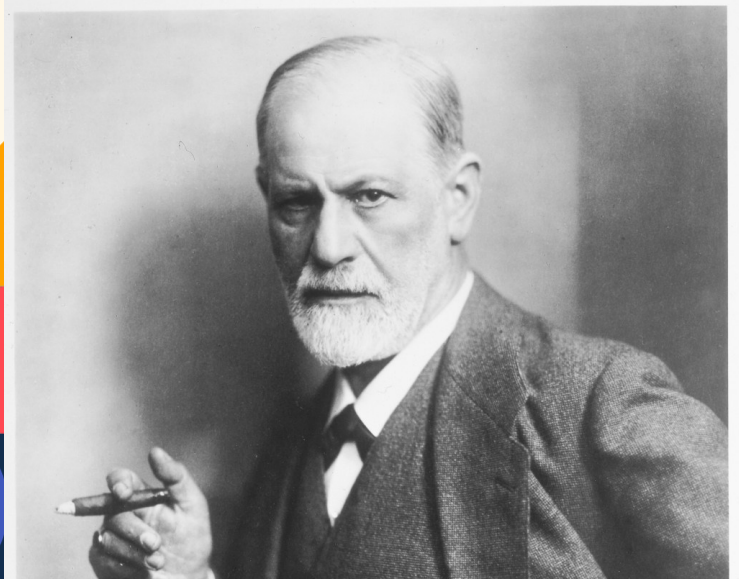
Doesn't it feel a bit 'new-fangled'?

## Everything starts with Freud...

Gustav Mahler consulted Freud when he was on holiday...

They took a long walk together.

Mahler's marital and sexual problems were resolved (according to [Starcevic](#) and Kuehn)



# Or maybe Rogers, depending on your view...

Carl Rogers used a single session in his work with 'Gloria'.

As did Fritz Perls and Albert Ellis.

('Gloria' films available via youtube at:  
<https://youtu.be/NFT89grAUOI>).



# Brief therapy has been around a while, in different guises...

Solution-focussed brief therapy:

- Something is working - build on it
- Imagine life without the problem
- Think small
- Think 'good enough'
- 'Always be closing'. "Can we stop?"

Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg



# Even in the analytic tradition...

- Malan, 1963
- Davanloo - Intensive Short Term Dynamic Psychotherapy
- Binder and Strupp, 1984 - Time Limited Dynamic Psychotherapy
- H Levenson, 1995 (Freud was impatient for cure).
- Fosha, 2000 - AEDP - Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy
- Fonagy, Lemma, Target, 2013 - DIT - Brief Dynamic Interpersonal Therapy

Illustrative list.



# And to bring things up to date...

Mick Cooper, Professor of Counselling Psychology at the University of Roehampton:

“Profoundly client-centred”

And Dr Andrew Reeves - the outgoing Chair of the BACP:

“Often exactly what clients need”

✓ **Professor Mick Cooper**

✓ **Dr Andrew Reeves**

# Moshe Talmon:

But the modern day version of the story starts with this man...

How did Talmon 'discover' single session therapy?

3 minute video clip of Talmon explaining the surprising origins of single session work.

<https://youtu.be/iYG2WV3LI-I>



## Still 'sceptical'?

# Objections...

Single session work is controversial.

Clients might like it

Commissioners might like it

'Point of need not availability'

**BUT...**

- What about the therapeutic relationship?
- Can change really happen that quickly?
- Surely you cant achieve lasting change?
- What about complex or traumatised clients?

*Or, 'have I really done all those years of training for something that only takes an hour to do...?'*

## Part Two:

- Case studies
- Clinical implications
- Overview of evidence
- Next steps





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## **Single Session Therapy - Part Two**



### **Overview of workshop - Part Two:**

- ✓ Definition and description
- ✓ History
- ✓ Objections - fast change/ lasting change/ the 'alliance'
- ✓ **Two brief case studies**
- ✓ **Implications for practice - therapists & clients**
- ✓ **An overview of the evidence**
- ✓ **Next steps**

# Two clinical examples:

- Bereaved mother, suffering 'flashbacks'
- Mid-life crisis



# But first, this...

- Avalanche
- The Big Bang
- Meteorites
- Volcano
- Birth

Ideas from the natural world.

Gradual evolution vrs sharp shifts - 'both/ and' not 'either/ or'



# Change in the natural world:

YouTube: [National Geographic clip](#)



## Clinical examples:

- Bereaved mother, suffering 'flashbacks'
- Mid-life crisis



# Single session therapy

## Clinical and practical implications

## Implications for the therapist:

What do those examples have in common?

What would you add to the list?

- ✓ Willing to challenge
- ✓ Willing to reframe
- ✓ Willing to help structure choices
- ✓ Set aside economic and other payoffs!
- ✓ Willing to provide what's needed *when* needed - staging post on the journey

# Implications for the client:

Prepared and able to:

*'take care of business now!'*

What's not true?

*Only certain problems*

*Only certain demographics*

- ✓ Willing to accept challenge
- ✓ Willing to allow others to reframe
- ✓ Accept choice and take responsibility
- ✓ Can go it alone - environment has resources
- ✓ Accept change can happen quickly

# Implications for working together:

Prepared and able to 'take care of business now!'

- ✓ Both must 'focus'
- ✓ Both must be realistic - shortcuts
- ✓ Don't reinvent the wheel
- ✓ Ask what is in their control
- ✓ Both accept 'therapy' takes place outside the session

# The 'Now' clock:

The Power of Now - Eckhart Tolle

Capitalising on readiness - burning platform

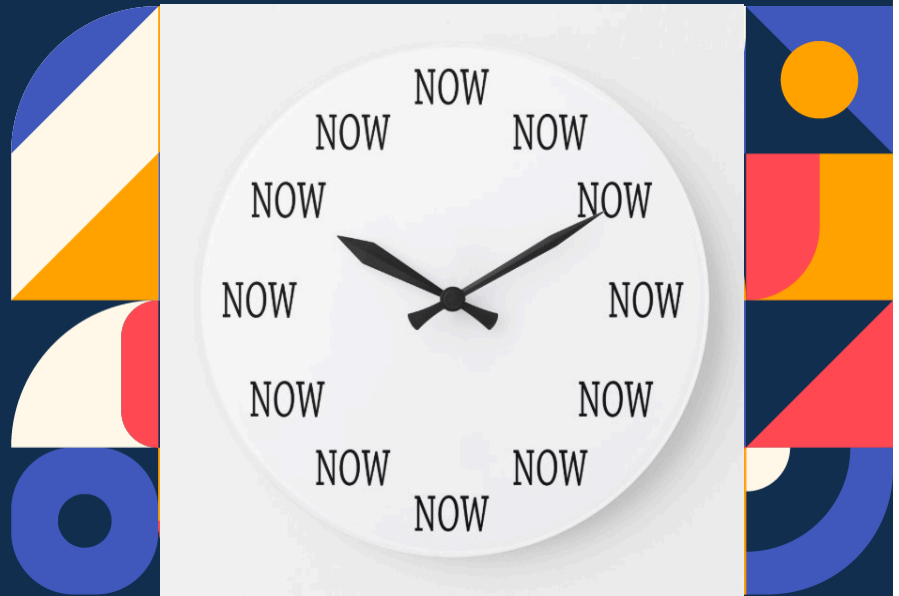
You don't know they'll come back

Do as much as you can

Too much therapy is focussed on help in the future  
- another day another session

Talmon: 'therapy takes exactly the length of time  
allocated to it. When the therapist and client  
expect change to happen, it often does'

Undergraduate essays



## Conclusions for practice:

- Not all clients are ready - some experiences remain too overwhelming
- **But some clients are ready - even in the circumstances of our eg**
- Sometimes clients 'just' want someone in their corner
- **But some clients want to work quickly**
- Relationships of trust need to be developed & nurtured - *"develop the alliance cautiously; relationships are fragile..."*
- **Not always, sometimes we just 'click' - "they just get me!"**
- Not all clients need or want long-term therapy - options/ choice/ OSFA
- **Check it's not you who wants the deep relationship! (Wallin, 1990)**



## One last objection: Don't you have to be a 'super-therapist'?

- Not if clients are ready - even in trauma, as we've seen in our example
- Not if clients actively want to work quickly
- Not if the relationship naturally forms quickly
- Not if you think of yourself as 'midwife' - assisting nature
- Not if you think of the client as 'able'
- Not if you accept small changes as valuable
- Not if therapy is 'the start of something' (sticking plasters and fevers).



# Single Session work

An overview of the evidence

# The jury is out...

- Current research does not allow us to settle the question.
- Too much variability between different studies - as well as method weaknesses - non-standardised measures and instruments/ use of therapist to collect data, for example
- E.g.: Hymmen et al (2013) of 1106 studies, only 18 met criteria, and only two were RCT
- Pitt et al (2015) shared those concerns
- Chapter 16 of Dryden (2020) for readable overview
- More rigour/ larger samples/ standardised measurement/ randomisation to control or comparison group

But...

- Clinical trial in NHS via IAPT Hampshire.
- Yields high client satisfaction scores - 61% of the time in Hymmen (2013)
- And in some trials up to 88% of participants reported improvements in their conditions
- "Most reviewers share the view that "many people benefit from single session work" - Dryden



## Your takeaways:

- Single session work is a mindset/ approach, not a technique
- What if this was the last time you saw the client - what do you want them to take away?
- Approach the session as if it could be your last - or at least OAAT (more isn't always better).
- Be ready to do business - clients often are. Check with them: what are you willing to change today? (Parallel to 12-step recovery)
- Clients report being highly satisfied with one session; 88% reported benefit at 3 & 12 months - respect their verdict
- Not all clients want a long relationship - check if it's you who wants this - ask yourself why. Think choice and OSFA.
- 'If clients can change in one session, therapists are not as significant to the change process as we'd like to think. Deal with it!'
- You have a WHOLE hour - use it. Think of therapy as: 'the start of something...'
- If the client says therapy has finished you can either accept their verdict or call them a 'dropout'.
- Clients apply ideas OUT of session. Resourceful not helpless. 'Extra-therapeutic factors' (Lambert 2005). Single sessions = the 'context for competence'.
- Some changes in nature are disruptive and abrupt. Why would all psychological change occur slowly?
- Therapists have been practicing brief therapy for over 100 years (since 1910, when Freud took a long walk with Mahler)

- Not all clients are ready - some experiences remain too overwhelming to speak to directly
- Sometimes clients 'just' want someone in their corner/ or want a 'witness' to their life

## Top three:

- Why not expect change today - don't underestimate client's strengths/ don't assume change only occurs gradually
- Aim small, and use the WHOLE hour!
- Therapists have been practicing single session work since 1910

## This one thing:

You have a WHOLE hour - don't waste it!



# Next steps:

- It is almost certainly a part of the future
- It's cheap
- It's popular
- # of people seeking MH help is increasing
- An idea whose time has come...

# Further reading:

Dryden: The Single-Session Counselling Primer (2020)

Dryden: Single Session Therapy: 100 Key Points and Techniques (2018)

Dryden: Single Session Therapy: Distinctive Features (2019)

Talmon: Single Session Therapy (1990)

Hoyt et al: Single Session Therapy (2018)

de Shazer: Keys to Solution in Brief Therapy (1985)

Wallin: Attachment in Psychotherapy (2015)

# Further training:

Dryden: one day w/shop, plus certificate

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# Thank you for your time

## Additional courses:

[lcap.co.uk](http://lcap.co.uk) for courses on:

- Attachment Theory
- Neuroscience
- How to pick the right partner
- The principles of evidence-based psychotherapy

And more...

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**[lcap.co.uk](http://lcap.co.uk)**

