**Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT)**

Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) is a time limited approach developed at Yale University by Gerald Klerman, Myrna Weissman, and Eugene Paykel in the 1970’s. IPT aims at teaching individuals resolving the disturbing life events, building social skills and increase organisational life skills. This is done by encouraging assertive communication, increasing adaptability, increasing supports, conflict resolution training and nurturing relationships.

**Interpersonal Psychotherapy Phases**

There are three phases in IPT. To illustrate these, an Example of someone with Major Depression whose loved one has passed seeks therapy:

1. **Beginning:** This phase is usually 1-3 sessions long. The Psychologist makes a diagnosis and the interpersonal context in which it presents. That is, the Psychologist links it to the person’s internal focus: “As we have discussed, you are suffering from major depression, which is a treatable medical condition so is not your fault.” This is very important to state in therapy as people experiencing depression often blame themselves for experiencing depression and see themselves as weak. “After having talked to you about your mother dying, it seems your depression is related to what is currently happening in your life: since your mum dying, you have been having sleep difficulties, your appetite has changed and you have socially withdrawn. This is what we call complicated bereavement. Let’s focus the next few session on addressing this. Once this interpersonal problem is addressed, your moods will improve and your life will be better.”
2. **Middle:** There are four areas to look at in the phase: individuals’ *disturbing life events*; interpersonal struggle with a significant other or other life upheaval (*role dispute*); important life changes (*role transition*) and *interpersonal deficits*. In the above example, this phase would be focussed on addressing appropriate mourning, resolving the individuals interpersonal struggle in a role dispute, help the individual mourn the loss of an old role and assume a new one in role transition, or decrease social isolation in interpersonal deficits. Individuals are encouraged to assert their needs and wants as well validate their emotions and teach them how to express them efficiently.
3. **End:** In this phase the Psychologist reminds the individual that therapy will be concluding soon and that itself is another role transition with inevitable hurtful and painful aspects. The individual is encouraged acknowledge and review their accomplishment thus far. The Psychologist reinforces healthy interpersonal skills when the individual succeeds in an interpersonal situation. When an individual does not succeed, on the other hand, the Psychologist brain storms and problem solves with him or her what went wrong and what could be done differently. Role playing ifs often used to explore and illustrate interpersonal options.