

Theorists and techniques

Forty names in eight waves, the three terms that belong to each and to no one else, the pairs the exam swaps, and how to recover when a name will not come.

Dr. Andrew Wichterman · 15 min read · 30 flashcards at the back

Counseling Skills and Interventions is thirty percent of the exam, the largest domain, and much of it is theory tested as recognition: a scenario, a technique, and four names. The names cannot be learned as paragraphs, because paragraphs about theorists all sound alike at speed. They have to be learned as anchors: for each person, the two or three terms that are theirs alone. This guide organizes the forty names the exam uses by wave, gives each its anchors, isolates the pairs that get swapped, and ends with thirty cards built the same way.

Why waves, not an alphabet

Theories arrived in response to each other, and the order carries the content. Psychoanalysis came first and everything after it is an argument with Freud: Adler and Jung left over the primacy of sexuality; the behaviorists rejected the unconscious altogether; the humanists rejected both determinism and conditioning; the cognitive therapists kept the behaviorists' rigor and added thought; the postmodern and systemic therapists moved the problem out of the individual. Learn the waves and a stem tells you its wave before it tells you its author: an item about the unconscious is wave one, about behavior wave two, about the person's experience wave three, about thinking wave four, about the system wave five.

Within a wave, the names differ by method, and method words are what the stems contain. "Dispute" is Ellis; "collaborative empiricism" is Beck; "directive" is Haley; "boundary" is Minuchin; "self-actualize" is Maslow; "meaning" is Frankl; "what are you doing, is it working" is Glasser; "miracle question" is de Shazer. When a name will not come on exam day, find the wave, then the method word, and two of the four options are gone.

Wave	Names	The stem is about
Psychodynamic	Freud, Adler, Jung, Erikson, object relations (Klein, Winnicott, Mahler, Kohut)	The unconscious, early relationships, defenses, the past
Behavioral	Pavlov, Watson, Skinner, Wolpe, Bandura, Lazarus	Observable behavior, learning, consequences
Humanistic and existential	Rogers, Maslow, Perls, Frankl, May, Yalom, Bugental	Experience, choice, meaning, the relationship
Cognitive	Ellis, Beck, Meichenbaum, Glasser	Thoughts, beliefs, choices, the present
Postmodern	de Shazer and Berg, White and Epston, Anderson and Goolishian, Miller and Rollnick	Language, strengths, exceptions, the client as expert
Systemic	Bowen, Minuchin, Haley and Madanes, Satir, Whitaker, Milan group	Patterns, roles, boundaries, the family as the client
Integrative and third wave	Lazarus (multimodal), Prochaska and DiClemente, Linehan, Hayes, Segal/Williams/Teasdale	Stages of change, acceptance, mindfulness, dialectics
Developmental (tested nearby)	Piaget, Vygotsky, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Bowlby, Ainsworth, Erikson, Levinson, Havighurst	Stages, tasks, attachment

Psychodynamic anchors

Freud: id, ego and superego; the psychosexual stages, oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital, with the Oedipus complex in the phallic stage; defense mechanisms, elaborated by Anna Freud; free association, dream interpretation, and the analysis of transference and resistance. The analyst is a neutral screen. Adler: inferiority and compensation, striving for superiority, social interest, the lifestyle, birth order, early recollections, fictional finalism, and encouragement; the relationship is egalitarian and the method is educational. Jung: the collective unconscious and archetypes, persona, shadow, anima and animus, individuation, introversion and extraversion, and the midlife turn inward; dreams are amplified against myth, not reduced to childhood.

Erikson: eight psychosocial stages, each a crisis between two poles, trust versus mistrust through integrity versus despair, extending development across the life span and making him the bridge between the psychodynamic and developmental tables. Object relations theorists moved the focus from drives to relationships: Klein's paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, Winnicott's good-enough mother, transitional object and holding environment, Mahler's separation-individuation with its rapprochement subphase, and Kohut's self psychology with mirroring, idealizing and twinship needs and the selfobject. Brief psychodynamic therapy, including Mann's time-limited therapy and Strupp and Binder's work, keeps the mechanism and shortens the course.

The pair the exam swaps is Adler and Jung, both post-Freudians with nothing else in common. Adler is social and practical: family, community, goals, encouragement. Jung is interior and symbolic: images, myths, the unlived self. A stem mentioning birth order or a child's place in the family is Adler every time; a stem mentioning a universal image, a dream figure or the second half of life is Jung.

Behavioral and cognitive anchors

Pavlov: classical conditioning, the conditioned stimulus and response, extinction, spontaneous recovery, generalization and discrimination. Watson: behaviorism as a program, and Little Albert. Skinner: operant conditioning, reinforcement and punishment, shaping, schedules of reinforcement, and the claim that behavior is explained by its consequences. Wolpe: systematic desensitization and reciprocal inhibition, the relaxation hierarchy. Bandura: social learning, observational learning and modeling, vicarious reinforcement, self-efficacy, and reciprocal determinism. Lazarus: multimodal therapy and the BASIC ID, behavior, affect, sensation, imagery, cognition, interpersonal, drugs and biology.

Ellis: rational emotive behavior therapy, the ABC model with D for disputing and E for the effective new philosophy, irrational beliefs as demands, musts and shoulds, and a forceful, teaching stance; shame-attacking exercises and unconditional self-acceptance. Beck: cognitive therapy, automatic thoughts, cognitive distortions, schemas and the cognitive triad of self, world and future in depression, collaborative empiricism, Socratic questioning, thought records and behavioral experiments. Meichenbaum: cognitive behavior modification, self-instructional training and stress inoculation training, with its conceptualization, skills acquisition and application phases. Glasser: reality therapy and choice theory, the five basic needs, survival, love and belonging, power, freedom and fun, total behavior, the quality world, and the WDEP system, wants, doing, evaluation and planning, from Wubbolding; no excuses, no punishment, no giving up.

The pair here is Ellis and Beck, both cognitive, split by method. Ellis disputes irrational beliefs directly and will argue; Beck treats automatic thoughts as hypotheses and tests them with the client. "Where is the evidence?" asked as a genuine question is Beck. "Where is it written that you must?" asked as a challenge is Ellis. A second pair: Bandura and Krumboltz, because Krumboltz applied social learning theory to careers; if the stem is about work, it is Krumboltz.

Exam tip. Reinforcement always increases a behavior; punishment always decreases it. Positive means something is added; negative means something is removed. Four cells, two questions, and every conditioning item is answered before you read the options.

Humanistic, existential and Gestalt anchors

Rogers: person-centered therapy, the six necessary and sufficient conditions, of which three are the core conditions of congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathy; the actualizing tendency, conditions of worth, incongruence between self and experience, and the nondirective stance. Maslow: the hierarchy of needs, physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization, the self-actualizing person and peak experiences. Perls: Gestalt therapy, awareness and the here and now, unfinished business, contact and contact boundary disturbances, introjection, projection, retrojection, deflection and confluence, the empty chair, exaggeration, "I" statements and the top dog and underdog.

Frankl: logotherapy, the will to meaning, paradoxical intention for anticipatory anxiety and dereflection for hyper-reflection, and the freedom to choose one's attitude in any circumstance, drawn from the camps. May: existential psychology in America, anxiety as normal and as neurotic, and the daimonic. Yalom: the four ultimate concerns, death, freedom, isolation and meaninglessness, in existential psychotherapy, and separately the eleven therapeutic factors and the here-and-now in group therapy. Bugental: authenticity and presence. Existential therapy has no techniques of its own and uses the relationship and the confrontation with the givens of existence.

Two look-alike sets. The empty chair is Gestalt; role reversal, doubling and the auxiliary ego are psychodrama, which is Moreno, and a stem with group members enacting a scene is psychodrama. Paradoxical intention is Frankl and treats an individual's fear; a paradoxical directive is Haley and prescribes a symptom to a family system. And "here and now" belongs to Perls in the individual room and to Yalom in the group room; interpersonal learning and the social microcosm are Yalom's and not Gestalt's.

Postmodern and motivational anchors

De Shazer and Berg: solution-focused brief therapy, the miracle question, scaling questions, exception questions, coping questions, compliments, the formula first-session task, and the stance that the client is the expert and the problem need not be understood to be solved; visitors, complainants and customers describe the client's relationship to change. White and Epston: narrative therapy, externalizing the problem so the person is not the problem, unique outcomes or sparkling moments, re-authoring the dominant story, definitional ceremonies and outsider witnesses, and therapeutic letters. Anderson and Goolishian: collaborative language systems and the not-knowing stance. Gergen: social constructionism as the philosophical ground.

Miller and Rollnick: motivational interviewing, the spirit of partnership, acceptance, compassion and evocation, the OARS skills, open questions, affirmations, reflections and summaries, change talk versus sustain talk, developing discrepancy, rolling with resistance, now framed as responding to discord, and supporting self-efficacy. The four processes are engaging, focusing, evoking and planning. MI is paired on the exam with Prochaska and DiClemente's transtheoretical model: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance and relapse or termination, with the rule that the intervention matches the stage.

The swap is solution-focused and narrative, both postmodern and strengths-based. Solution-focused looks forward to a preferred future and scales distance to it; narrative looks at the story and rewrites it. If the stem has a miracle, a scale or an exception, it is de Shazer. If it has a problem given a name and talked about as outside the person, it is White.

Exam tip. Match the intervention to the stage. Precontemplation gets awareness and empathy, not a plan. Preparation gets a plan. Maintenance gets relapse prevention. An item that offers a good plan to a client who does not see a problem is offering it at the wrong stage.

Systemic anchors

Bowen: multigenerational family systems, differentiation of self, triangles, the nuclear family emotional process, the family projection process, multigenerational transmission, emotional cutoff, sibling position and societal regression; the genogram is the tool and the therapist stays de-triangled and coaches. Minuchin: structural family therapy, subsystems, boundaries from rigid to diffuse, enmeshment and disengagement, hierarchy, coalitions, joining and accommodating, mapping, enactments, unbalancing and boundary making; the therapist is active and in the room. Haley and Madanes: strategic therapy, directives, paradoxical interventions, ordeals, prescribing the symptom, the problem as a sequence to interrupt, and Madanes' pretend techniques; the therapist takes responsibility for change.

Satir: the human validation process model, the five communication stances, placater, blamer, super-reasonable or computer, irrelevant or distracter, and leveler or congruent, self-esteem as the core, family sculpting, the family reconstruction and the parts party. Whitaker: symbolic-experiential therapy, the therapist's use of self, absurdity and craziness in the service of growth, co-therapy, and the battle for structure and the battle for initiative. The Milan group, Selvini Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin and Prata: circular questioning, hypothesizing, neutrality, positive connotation and invariant prescriptions. Jackson, Watzlawick and the MRI: homeostasis, first- and second-order change, the double bind with Bateson.

The swap is Minuchin and Haley, both of the structural-strategic era. Minuchin works on the structure in the room, drawing boundaries through enactments; Haley works on the sequence with directives carried out at home. Reframing is used by everyone in this wave and does not identify a school. Triangles are Bowen's; coalitions, especially cross-generational ones, are Minuchin's. Differentiation is Bowen's; boundaries are Minuchin's.

Integrative, third-wave and developmental anchors

Linehan: dialectical behavior therapy for borderline personality disorder, the dialectic of acceptance and change, validation, four skills modules, mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation and interpersonal effectiveness, diary cards, chain analysis, and the four-part structure of individual therapy, skills group, phone coaching and consultation team. Hayes: acceptance and commitment therapy, psychological flexibility, the six processes, acceptance, cognitive defusion, present-moment contact, self-as-context, values and committed action, and experiential avoidance as the problem. Segal, Williams and Teasdale: mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depressive relapse, built on Kabat-Zinn's MBSR. Third-wave therapies change the relationship to thoughts rather than their content.

Developmental theorists are tested in the Clinical Focus domain but get confused with the counseling theorists, so they belong in the same table. Piaget: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational, with object permanence, egocentrism, conservation and abstract reasoning as the markers, and assimilation and accommodation as the mechanisms. Vygotsky: the zone of proximal development, scaffolding and the social origin of thought. Kohlberg: preconventional, conventional and postconventional morality in six stages; Gilligan: the ethic of care as a response. Bowlby: attachment, the secure base and internal working models; Ainsworth: the Strange Situation and the secure, avoidant and ambivalent patterns, with Main and Solomon adding disorganized. Levinson: seasons of a man's life and the midlife transition; Havighurst: developmental tasks.

Two more pairs for the deck. Piaget and Vygotsky both explain cognitive development; Piaget's child discovers alone through stages, Vygotsky's child learns with a more capable other. Kohlberg and Gilligan both explain moral

development; Kohlberg's stages reason from justice, Gilligan's from care and relationship. And Erikson appears in both tables, which is why he is the most-tested developmental name on the exam.

Working an item when the name will not come

A client tells her counselor she keeps a list of everything she must accomplish each day and feels worthless when she misses an item; the counselor asks where it is written that she must accomplish all of it, points out that she has survived every missed item so far, and assigns her to deliberately leave one task undone this week. Wave four, cognitive. Method words: "where is it written," a demand challenged, a deliberately imperfect homework. Ellis. The distractor is Beck, who would have examined the evidence for worthlessness collaboratively, and Glasser, who would have asked whether the list was getting her what she wants.

A family presents because the fourteen-year-old refuses school; the therapist notices the mother answers every question put to the girl and asks the father and daughter to plan a weekend together while the mother watches. Wave five, systemic. Method words: in the room, an enactment, a boundary redrawn across generations. Minuchin. The distractor is Haley, who would have sent a directive home, and Bowen, who would have coached one member toward differentiation and might not have had the family in the room at all.

A client in his fifties, successful and restless, brings a recurring dream of a dark figure following him through his childhood home; the therapist explores the figure as a disowned part of himself. Wave one, psychodynamic. Method words: midlife, a dream image treated as symbol, a part of the self. Jung, the shadow. The distractor is Freud, who would reduce the dream to a childhood wish, and Perls, who would have the client speak as the figure in the empty chair. Three items, three waves, and in each the method word did the work the name would have done.

Theorists and techniques: fold-and-cut cards

Print these pages single-sided. Cut along the dashed lines, then fold each strip on the dotted line so the term is on the front and the answer on the back. Shuffle in with your other cards; the ones you miss come back first.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 1

Freud (3 anchors)

Id, ego, superego; psychosexual stages; free association, transference and resistance.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 2

Adler (3 anchors)

Inferiority and striving; social interest and lifestyle; birth order and early recollections.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 3

Jung (3 anchors)

Collective unconscious and archetypes; persona, shadow, anima/animus; individuation.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 4

Adler vs. Jung

Social and practical (family, goals, encouragement) vs. interior and symbolic (images, myth, midlife).

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 5

Erikson

Eight psychosocial crises across the life span, trust vs. mistrust through integrity vs. despair.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 6

Winnicott

Good-enough mother, transitional object, holding environment.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 7

Kohut

Self psychology: mirroring, idealizing and twinship needs; the selfobject.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 8

Skinner

Operant conditioning: reinforcement, punishment, shaping, schedules.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 9

Wolpe

Systematic desensitization; reciprocal inhibition.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 10

Bandura

Observational learning and modeling; self-efficacy; reciprocal determinism.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 11

Lazarus

Multimodal therapy; BASIC ID.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 12

Ellis

REBT: ABCDE; irrational demands (musts); forceful disputing; shame-attacking exercises.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 13

Beck

Cognitive therapy: automatic thoughts, distortions, schemas, cognitive triad; collaborative empiricism.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 14

Ellis vs. Beck

Disputes beliefs as a teacher vs. tests thoughts as hypotheses with the client.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 15

Meichenbaum

Self-instructional training; stress inoculation training.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 16

Glasser

Reality therapy / choice theory: five needs, quality world, total behavior, WDEP.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 17

Rogers

Core conditions: congruence, unconditional positive regard, empathy; actualizing tendency; conditions of worth.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 18

Maslow

Hierarchy of needs ending in self-actualization; peak experiences.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 19

Perls

Gestalt: here and now, unfinished business, contact boundary disturbances, empty chair, top dog/underdog.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 20

Frankl

Logotherapy: will to meaning; paradoxical intention; dereflection.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 21

Yalom

Four ultimate concerns (death, freedom, isolation, meaninglessness); eleven therapeutic factors in groups.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 22

Empty chair vs. role reversal

Gestalt (Perls) vs. psychodrama (Moreno).

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 23

de Shazer and Berg

Solution-focused: miracle question, scaling, exceptions, client as expert.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 24

White and Epston

Narrative: externalizing the problem, unique outcomes, re-authoring, therapeutic letters.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 25

Miller and Rollnick

Motivational interviewing: OARS, change talk, developing discrepancy, rolling with resistance.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 26

Bowen

Differentiation of self, triangles, multigenerational transmission, emotional cutoff; genogram.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 27

Minuchin

Structural: subsystems, boundaries, enmeshment/disengagement, joining, enactments.

THEORISTS AND TECHNIQUES · 28

Haley and Madanes

Strategic: directives, paradoxical interventions, ordeals, prescribing the symptom; pretend techniques.

Satir

Communication stances (placater, blamer, super-reasonable, irrelevant, leveler); self-esteem; sculpting.

Linehan vs. Hayes

DBT: dialectics, validation, four skills modules vs. ACT: psychological flexibility, defusion, values.