
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

It's good to talk



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Welcome to 6 Minute English, where we bring you a thoughtful topic and six items of vocabulary.

Rob

I'm Rob...

Neil

And I'm Neil. So I was watching an old Woody Allen movie last night...

Rob

OK. Is he the anxious middle-aged guy from New York who talks about his problems all the time?

Neil

That's the one. He was paying for... psychoanalysis – and that's a type of talk therapy that was popular in the 1970s. Do you know what therapy means, Rob?

Rob

Yes. **Therapy** means a type of treatment for a problem or illness. And talk therapy is a treatment for **psychological** problems – which means problems of the mind – in case you were struggling with another long Greek word, Neil! Trained therapists work with you on ways to understand your thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

Neil

Hey, Rob, I'm an expert on long Greek words. Psychology is the noun, by the way. And the prefix 'psycho' in front of any word means to do with the mind.

Rob

For example the horror movie *Psycho*... Which is all about the disturbed mind of the main character, Norman Bates...

Neil

...Where **disturbed** means not thinking or behaving in a normal way – because you have psychological problems. Norman Bates would have found talk therapy helpful, don't you think?

Rob

Hmm. I'm not sure really. Anyway, let's have a quiz question – shall we now, Neil? Can you tell me who invented the first talk therapy? Was it...

- a) Boris Karloff,
- b) Carl Jung or
- c) Sigmund Freud?

Neil

I'm going to go for Sigmund Freud.

Rob

OK. Interesting answer – we'll find out later whether it was the right one or not. Now, moving on, what do you think is the most common psychological problem today, Neil?

Neil

It's depression. And **depression** – a feeling of unhappiness that can affect your thoughts, behaviour, and feelings – is the most common psychological problem affecting people throughout the world.

Rob

How depressing! That's the adjective! It makes me feel depressed just thinking about it.

Neil

And depressed is the adjective we use to describe how we are feeling. Don't feel depressed, Rob! Let's listen to Professor Brent Roberts from the University of Illinois to find out more about the benefits of talk therapy.

INSERT

Professor Brent Roberts from the University of Illinois

Seeing a therapist does result in marked changes in psychological functioning. So people get less depressed and they get less anxious, and it seems to be regardless of what type of intervention is engaged in. And that is... and that has been one of the more positive aspects of the therapy research that we've seen.

Neil

So when people talk to therapists about their problems, it results in marked changes in their psychological functioning – **marked** here means obvious or noticeable.

Rob

And these marked changes are that people become less depressed and anxious!

Neil

An **intervention**, by the way, is something you do to improve a medical problem – and in this context, it refers to different types of talk therapy.

Rob

But why is talking about our problems helpful, Neil?

Neil

I think it gives a shape to our problems. It makes them seem clearer – and that's a first step in being able to manage them. Also, "a problem shared is a problem halved", as the saying goes.

Rob

There's also some scientific evidence that talk therapy can change the way we think and feel – by replacing negative thought patterns with positive ones.

Neil

Medication can also change the way we think and feel. Some people take pills to treat depression.

Rob

But medication can have negative effects, for example it can make you feel sleepy during the daytime.

Neil

Well, here's a positive thought – let's check how much we've learned today by going over today's vocabulary! We had therapy...

Rob

Therapy is a type of treatment for a problem or illness. There's therapy – therapist – therapeutic.

Neil

My therapist is using a new therapy with me – it's very therapeutic!

Rob

Therapeutic – means treating an illness – but in a more general sense, it can simply mean relaxing. For example, I find listening to music very therapeutic.

Neil

OK. Next up – psychological – relating to the mind. Psychology – psychologist – psychological. Depression and anxiety are both psychological problems.

Rob

My friend is studying psychology at university.

Neil

I want to be a famous psychologist.

Rob

A career change at your age, Neil?! You've kept that one a secret. OK. Number three – disturbed – not thinking or behaving in a normal way because you have psychological problems. She was a disturbed young woman.

Neil

Or disturbing – I've been having very disturbing dreams recently.

Rob

Poor Neil! Disturbing here means upsetting or worrying.

Neil

Next item – depression – a feeling of unhappiness that can affect your thoughts, behaviour, and feelings.

Rob

We felt depressed by the news.

Neil

The news was very depressing!

Rob

Alright. Let's lift the mood – marked means obvious or noticeable. There's been a marked improvement in your English homework!

Neil

There was a marked increase in the company's profits last year!

Rob

And finally – intervention – something you do to improve a problem – medical or otherwise.

Neil

Let me intervene at this point – intervene – that's the verb and in this context it means to interrupt – and say we've forgotten the quiz question, Rob!!

Rob

Oh, no! Good intervention. Yes, let's remind ourselves of that quiz question: who invented the first talk therapy? And you said Sigmund Freud, which is the right answer, so well done, Neil! Psychoanalysis was invented in the early 1890s by Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud. The patient lies on a couch and talks about their thoughts, feelings and dreams while the therapist listens. Psychoanalytic sessions typically last 50 minutes and take place 4 to 5 times a week.

Neil

OK. Good to know. But I think I prefer our own brand of talk therapy here on the show. And listeners – you can express your thoughts and feelings by visiting our Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube pages.

Rob

Talk to you again soon! Bye-bye!

Neil

So tell me about your childhood, Rob...